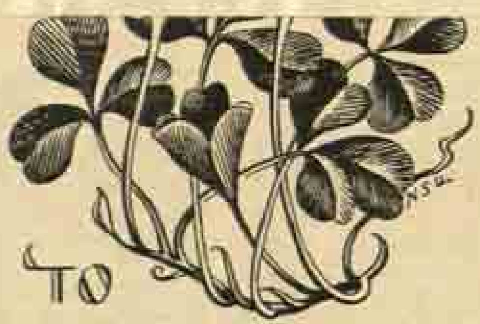

TO

LITTLE VEHICLE

By the same author:

LITTLE CHINA
CHARLES-QUINT ET LA TOISON D'OR
NORTH AFRICA
PARTS OF BARBARY
BEYOND THE BURMA ROAD
CROSS-CHANNEL
EARLY MAN

The Royal Ballet Dancers in a Court of Phnompenh Palace



LITTLE VEHICLE

CAMBODIA & LAOS

by

ALAN HOUGHTON BRODRICK

With 36 Illustrations

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The photographs facing pages 80, 113, 176 and 240 were taken by the late Comtesse de Carol-Rémusat.

'Nous sommes de grands fols! "Il a passé sa vie en oisiveté" disons-nous: "Je n'ay rien faict d'aujourd'huy." Quoy! avez-vous pas vescu? c'est non seulement la fondamentale, mais la plus illustre de vos occupations. "Si on m'eust mis au propre des grands maniements, j'eusse montré ce que je sçavoy faire." Avez vous sceu mediter et manier vostre vie? vous avez faict la plus grande besoigne de toutes: pour se montrer et exploicter, nature n'a que faire de fortune; elle se montre egallement en tous estages, et derriere, comme sans rideau. Avez-vous sceu composer vos moeurs? vous avez bien plus faict que celuy qui a composé des livres. Avez-vous sceu prendre du repos? vous avez plus faict que celuy qui a pris des empires et des villes. Le glorieux chef-d'oeuvre de l'homme, c'est vivre à propos. . . .'

MONTAIGNE

FOREWORD

IN 1939 when were made the journeys upon whose experience this book is based, the European grip upon most of south-eastern Asia was still secure. Although there were not wanting signs of the storm which was to sweep away so many things, outwardly and upon the surface, the situation, prestige and position of Westerners was very much what it had been for generations.

Now, in 1948, although less than a decade has slipped by, it is clear that never again will any traveller see Indo-China as I was lucky enough to see it on the eve of the last world-war.

On 28th March, 1942, the Emperor Bao-Dai performed the Sacrifice to Heaven for the last time. In the Annamese lands the last vestiges of antique China have disappeared.[1] The old-fashioned mandarins who foretold the collapse of the dynasty and the withdrawal of the Mandate of Heaven from a puppet and doubtfully legitimate ruler, have seen their worst fears realized. That old servant of State who, in 1939, shook his head and murmured to me in classical phrase 'The Great Destiny is approaching' spoke truer than most aged pessimists. The traditional euphemism in Chinese is 'The price of coffins tends to rise. . . .'[2]

Cambodia, however, to which country this second half of my story of Indo-China is devoted, has suffered less change than the lands to the east.

But there has been change, nevertheless. When the French troops returned to Indo-China after the collapse of Japan, the force of

[1] Readers of *Little China*, my book on the Annamese lands, may be interested to learn of the destruction wrought at Hué the capital of Annam. On 5th February, 1947, when the French troops were on their way from Tourane to Hué, the Vietminh soldiery sacked and then burned most of the buildings within the Purple Forbidden City. The Can-Canh-Dien Palace is a heap of ruins. The Can-Thanh-Dien Palace is gutted. The imperial residence was mined and then blown up. The Khai-Dinh Museum is a battered hulk. Only the empty Thai-Soa-Kien or Throne Room stands amid the desolation. The imperial treasures have all disappeared—the ritual objects for the imperial cults, the dynastic relics, the seals, jades, silks, porcelains, jewels, bronzes and paintings. Even the Patent of Investiture issued in 1804 by the Emperor of China to Gia-Long as Emperor of Annam, has disappeared.

[2] *i.e.*, it is, therefore, desirable to use one for oneself without delay—by suicide.

'Free Cambodians' or *Issaraks* took to the bush and (in alliance with the Vietnamese) put up some resistance. And the *Issarak* movement is not dead. Its leaders exercise considerable influence on the largest political party—the 'Democratic,' for Cambodia is now, in appearance, at any rate, a constitutional monarchy with a parliament. But although there is no longer a French Resident at Phnompenh, there is a 'Commissioner of the French Republic' and every Cambodian Minister must have, at least, one French 'adviser.' Constitutions were adopted in 1947 for both Cambodia and the Laos, but in the latter country the sovereign has rather more power than in the former. All the public acts of H.M. King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia must be countersigned by the Prime Minister and another member of the Cabinet. Only one countersignature is required in the Laos where, moreover, when Parliament is not sitting the monarch may govern by decrees which, however, must be ratified later by the elected representatives of the people.

After the Japanese surrender the 'Free Laotians' (protected by the Chinese army of occupation) secured the abdication of King Sisavong Vong of Luang Prabang. A 'constitutional' government was then set up which restored the King as the ruler of an independent Laos comprising not only his former kingdom of Luang Prabang, but all the Laotian territories of Indo-China.

Nevertheless, the royal ceremonies at the Court of Phnompenh may survive for years and even the dance-rituals, sorely diminished and corrupted as they are, will perhaps linger on as long as the kings reign in the ancient land of the Khmers.[1]

Therefore, this volume of my work on Indo-China, of which *Little China* was the first instalment, presents a picture which, in all but a few unimportant details, is as true for the Cambodia of to-day as for that of nearly a decade ago.

Little Vehicle treats of a country as different from *Little China* as is India from China itself. When *Little China* appeared in 1942, one reviewer complained that it contained no references to Angkor and the majestic monuments of the ancient Khmers.

The remark was about as apposite as would be a reflexion that a book on Germany tells us nothing about the Kremlin.

Indian-influenced Cambodia and the Chinese-patterned

[1] When we, most inadvisedly, abolished the Burmese monarchy, the royal ballet and the traditional, antique dances did not long survive. In Burma, as elsewhere, European control and administration has been followed by a blurring of culture, a dulling of existence for the mass of men, and a great increase in the sum of boredom to be borne by our subjects.

Annamese lands are contiguous, but beyond a common frontier they have little else in common.[1]

'Little Vehicle'[2] is the name given to the so-called *Hinayāna* form of Buddhism in contradistinction to the *Mahāyāna* or Great Vehicle. In the earlier years of Buddhist history, there were held (as later on in Christianity) General Councils to establish points of doctrine and to approve the canon of the Scriptures. Doubtless, among the early Buddhists, as among the followers of all organized religions, the differences arising between the "traditionalists' and the 'innovators' also made the holding of œcumenical councils desirable. But, despite the councils, in the first and second centuries a Great Schism split the Church. Thenceforth there were to be two forms of Buddhism. The *Hinayāna* and the *Mahāyāna*.

The men of the *Hinayāna* have no God. For them the Buddha is but the most eminent of men. They hold to the literal interpretation of the Master's dying words:

'Be then, O Ananda, your own Lamps. Be your own Refuge.' Man has no saviour but himself. The reward for right doing is not eternal life, but extinction and freedom from successive reincarnations.

The *Hinayāna* Scriptures are written in Pali.

The men of the *Mahāyāna* deified the Buddha and surrounded him with an ever-increasing number of other Buddhas and of Bodhisattvas. These additional Buddhas are personified abstractions while the Bodhisattvas are future Buddhas, beings about to become Buddhas and attain Illumination, but they are also beings of such infinite charity and compassion, that out of love for mortals in distress, they refuse, so that they may prolong their salving activities, to enter into the *nirvana* they have merited.

The *Mahāyāna* doctrine, fortified with an imposing dogmatic literature (written in Sanskrit), spread to all those regions of Asia which were influenced by India—to Tibet, Central Asia, Mongolia, China, Japan, Insulindia and old Cambodia.

The headquarters of the *Hinayāna* school have been for ages in

[1] It is hardly unnecessary to stress these points. We may still not seldom hear fairly well-informed people confuse Annam with Assam. But, of course, sounds are always more imperative than sense. Years ago, I happened to mention to the old French *coiffeur* of the barber's shop at the Brevoort Hotel on lower Fifth Avenue, New York, that I was soon leaving for France and proposed to spend the summer in the country near Angers. 'What do you mean,' he exclaimed, 'I haven't been so long in these United States that I've forgotten Angers is in North Africa." Well, *Angers*—*Alger*—why not?

[2] sc. 'of salvation' in the Buddhist sense, that is rescue from existence.

Ceylon and it was thence that the doctrine spread, comparatively lately, into Indo-China.

The ancient Khmers (the ancestors of the Cambodians) when they were not Hinduists were Buddhists of the *Mahāyāna* school.[1] The modern Cambodians were converted to the Little Vehicle by their former subjects the Siamese, who had adopted this doctrine. The *Hinayāna* is the prevailing religious confession in Ceylon, in Burma, in Siam, in the Laos and in Cambodia.

But, to-day, *Hinayāna* Buddhism is so all-pervasive in Cambodia, that I can think of no better name to give this book than *Little Vehicle*. The State religion and the Established Church still link Cambodia with the India to which the Khmers owed all their civilization.

If, however, Cambodia owes so much to India, the land of the Khmers is not a 'Little India' in the sense that the Annamese lands made be held to make up a 'Little China.' Cambodia was never a part of any great Indian realm and the empire of the Khmers was only a colonial India in the sense that old Cambodia was colonized spiritually, intellectually and artistically. There was never any direct imposition of conformity. The creations of Khmer art are creations not just copies. The Khmers in transforming produced some of the most majestic monuments man has made upon this earth.

As M. Georges Coedès[2] has well put it:

> '*Toute une série de royaumes qui, après avoir été à leurs débuts de véritables Etats hindous, ont, sous la réaction du substrat autochtone, évolué chacun selon son génie propre, mais en gardant dans leurs manifestations culturelles cet air de famille qu'ils doivent à leur commune origine.*'

So, the Indian-inspired civilizations overseas—in Java, in Champa, in Cambodia and elsewhere—show no close imitation of Indian models. Each culture is a thing apart. We may compare the Indian influence in Cambodia with that of China in Japan. Wherever the Chinese conquered and annexed, the subject lands were quite integrated into the Chinese cultural complex. They became 'Little

[1] When we say that the ancient Khmers were Hinduists or Mahayana Buddhists, it may be understood that the sovereigns and members of the ruling caste were so. It may well be that, until comparatively recent times, the real religion of the mass of the people was the age-old animism, still the religion of the so-called 'savage' tribes of Indo-China, and still, indeed, a vigorous substratum underlying the Buddhistic piety of most Cambodians.

[2] For years Director of the *Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* at Hanoi and since 1947 the successor of the late Professor Pelliot as director of the *Musée d'Ennery* in Paris. I owe much both to his conversation and to his books.

Chinas.' But Japan was never conquered. Chinese influence in the archipelago spread as did Indian influence in south-eastern Asia—by merchants, marauders and missionaries. And, although the Japanese owe to China all their civilization it is, nevertheless, a Japanese one, whereas the Annamese civilization is largely Chinese since Annam was for a thousand years an integral part of the Chinese Empire.

Much of any book about Cambodia must be devoted to the ancient shrines and temples and palaces which are the glory of the country. But life in this earthly paradise is complex and I have tried to convey something of the quiet beauty and stillness of the land and its people.

A. H. B.

ANGKOR, 1939.
PARIS 1947.

The following short list of common Cambodian words appearing in place-names, may be found useful:

Arak	a genius or spirit
Banteai	a fortified enclosure
Barai	an artificial lake
Beng	a pool or mere
Don	land
Khat	a district
Kompong	a wharf, a market by a river's banks
Kuk	a cell, sanctuary
O	a brook or stream
Phnom	a hill or mountain
Phum	a village
Prah	sacred
Prasat	a tower, a temple
Prei	a forest
Spean	a bridge
Stu'ung	a river
Thma	a stone
Thmot	a sugar-palm
Thusar	a door
Tonle	a 'sea' or large lake
Trapeang	a pool
Tu'k	water
Vat	a pagoda or temple
Veal	a plain

INTRODUCTION

'. . . . ce petit être donne à penser. . . . Il assemble sur soi, il assume une majesté qui était confuse dans nous tous, et qui habitait imperceptiblement les acteurs. . . . Une simple marche, et déesse la voici, et nous, presque des dieux! . . . On dirait qu'elle paye l'espace avec de beaux actes bien égaux, et qu'elle frappe du talon les sonores effigies du mouvement. . . . Mais considère cette parfaite procession . . . sur le sol sans défaut, libre, net et à peine élastique. Elle place avec symétrie sur ce miroir de ses forces, ses appuis alternés; le talon versant le corps vers la pointe, l'autre pied passant et recevant ce corps, et le reversant à l'avance, et ainsi, cependant que la cime adorable de sa tête trace dans l'éternel présent le front d'une vague ondulée.'

L'Ame et la Danse—PAUL VALÉRY.

THE way from Siem-Reap is a full three miles through a jungle-park. Thick-set trees cut back from the broad, sandy path. Monkeys chattering from the branches. Parrots flashing rosy in the dusk.

Then the avenue fans out on to Angkor Vat, mauve and ochre in the sunset.

Beyond two hundred yards of moat the temple walls rise high. Balustrades of giants clutching the sinuous bodies of great serpents border the causeway across the still waters. On either side of the bridge's entrance rears up a huge seven-fold hooded head. By day this double parapet is well-preserved enough. Now, it stands out grey-green and intact.

Night falls very swiftly. The earth is luminous while awaiting the moon.

The moat is choked with water-lilies and lotuses. Among the aquatic plants a small herd of elephant is lumbering, their backs douched with shafts of liquid silver.

Beyond the causeway, the main gate towers up as lofty as a cathedral's entrance. Behind, and beyond, is the templed hill itself three hundred feet above its vast court.

Torches flicker down the lateral galleries to the right and the

left of the gateway . . . bats zigzag enlivening the bas-reliefs of ancient Hindu legends—the Churning of the Sea of Milk, the Battle of Gods and Devils—here and there a standing image sways a little. A benedictory Buddha throwing a long, living shadow.

The background of the ballet is the temple terrace at the far end of a paved avenue between the lotus pools and within the encircling wall of the temple's court.

The torch-bearers' procession splits and the jagged, yellow line of flames smoothes out into a semi-circle. The dancing girls kneel in two rows lighted from below by the flickering tongues of fire.[1]

The orchestra breaks into the 'Ballet of Welcoming Wishes.' This is music without harmonic embroidery. There are no modal indications. No terminal cadences we can perceive. But the pentatonic scale is extraordinarily fluid. *Sonus disilientis aquae*—the sound of water plashing down . . . the slithering notes of the bamboo xylophone . . . the frail, fresh, limpid music of the iron-keyed piano.[2]

The choir sings an echo to the orchestral music . . . or the orchestra picks up the echo of a song . . . what the choir sings is full of fantasy and incoherence . . . the words slip by, but attention is halted now and then by imperative phrases learned at a mother's knee . . . the ballet-choir, for the most part, chants a pre-word language of phrase and intonation. Neither the poses of the dance nor the song of the singers seeks to prove anything . . . no conclusion is offered. The play, the dance, the song, the music ramble about with no beginning and no end. No moral edification. No story of impossible good or bad luck . . . an image, indeed, of our lives highly stylized, sterilized, transmuted, withdrawn from pity, love and fear, and unfolded for us with a consummate art.[3] . . .

The Cambodian is, they say, the poorest of all Far Eastern musics, but the invading, penetrating and pervasive charm of it is

[1] By two in the afternoon (and we are now at ten at night) the girls are painted and sewn into their robes. These Angkor dancers were by no means the best in Cambodia—they are in the King's Court—nor even the second-best—they were at the San Francisco World's Fair—but the Angkor ballet-girls are excellent all the same.

[2] The orchestra's instruments are generally as follows (*a*) the *roneat-ek* or canoe-shaped xylophone supported upon a pedestal (b) the *kong-thom* or circle of bells (c) the *takhe* or three-chorded guitar (d) the *roneat-thung* or xylophone with hard-wood keys (e) the *roneat-dek* or piano with flat keyboard and iron keys. To these are often added clarinettes and shrill violins.

[3] Whether the piece be drawn ostensibly from the ancient Indian epics (a favourite episode is the Expedition of Hanuman the King of the Monkeys to Lanka) or whether it be taken from the fund of Cambodian folk-lore (e.g. 'The Story of Prince Prea Somut, of Princess Vinean Chan and of the Marvellous Jewel') the drama will be stuffed with improvisations, 'gags' and embellished with endless variations.

irresistible. It is nothing like any Indian music. Nothing less resembles the humming, bumble-bee drone, hot and unquiet of southern India. The Cambodian dance-drama music, hieratic, archaic, evocatory, belongs to the world of the Farthest East and of Cathay—of ancient Cathay, it may be, before sacred dancing faded from the Chinese scene under the conventional conformity of later Confucian tradition.[1]

The rippling, cool, watery notes of the xylophone, the bagpipe squeaks of the oboes and the throbbing of the drums flow on and on for hours. . . .

The girls are posed.

'Of medium-height, well-shaped, in the flower of their youth and admirable to contemplate, you cannot look upon them without love. The eye is not tired. The soul is rejoiced. The heart is not cloyed. When you have gazed upon them for a time your spirit is filled with their image and you can no longer move . . . Oh! how marvellous a spectacle, comparable with that of the Abode of the Thirty-Three!'[2]

Here are princes and princesses wearing the light coronets of their rank. A king with gilded face and crowned with high pointed diadem. There is a giant and his female counterpart. The demon has a black face, red lips, eyes and nostrils. His cropped poll is studded with hob-nails in guise of hair. Now we have terrible Krut or Garuda, the bird-headed divinity bearing in his beak a magic ball whereby he can render himself invisible at will.[3]

When masks are worn they are heavy and cover the dancers' whole heads. The holes for the eyes are small so that the girls dance almost blind. The dresses and robes and masks are fixed and con-

[1] Burmese, Siamese, Cambodian, Laotian and Javanese music are all closely related and come within the orbit of the Chinese as opposed to the Indian system. Nowadays, much to the disgust of the traditionalists, fan-dances and singing-dancers are to be seen and heard within the Palace itself. The effect of these novelties is indeed rather charming, but they have no part in the old classical Cambodian ballet-drama which is degenerating fast.

[2] The Lay of Prea Ket Mealea (*see* p. 176)

[3] The *roi au masque d'or* recurs in many lands and at many times from Mycenae to modern Cambodia where the dead king lies in state, his visage covered with a golden mask (*see* p. 234). 'Giants' (*yeak*) and 'giantesses' (*yakshini*) in Cambodian legend are rather beings of supernatural power than of supernatural stature. In the Indian legend the *yeak* and *yakshini* are spirits of nature. Garuda or Krut, the King of the Birds, is the Vehicle of Vishnu and his faithful slave. Dancers wearing the Krut masks are depicted in the sculptures of the inside gallery to the west of the Bayon at Angkor Thom where also are portrayed scenes from the life of dancing-girls—their baths, their hair-dressing, their massage and their exercises.

ventional and always the same whether at the Court of Phnompenh, on the steps of Angkor or on the village green.

The royal ballet girls are adorned with real jewels and some dancers carry on them as much as six pounds' weight of metal and gems—buckles, bracelets, armlets, necklaces, anklets, pendants, ear-rings, coronets, and *mkot* or great pointed crown—all of gold.

These pointed diadems are the prerogative of the Gods and of the Gods' representatives and kinsmen, Kings.[1]

The girls' faces are daubed dead-white with rice-powder and then tinted with saffron so that in the moonlight or by the reflected flame of the torches, the dancer's flesh glows gold or silver. The lips are heavily rouged. The eyebrows lamp-blacked. The eyes are enlarged with kohl and the arms, hands and legs thickly powdered with saffron.

Throughout the long drama no girl shows upon her face any expression whatsoever—no sign of fatigue, no bead of sweat, no apparent consciousness of the audience. . . .

The time-beaters hammer out the rhythm.

Each plastic phase is developed, sustained, and as it were, glorified by a musical phase of the orchestra or of the choir or of both together.

The attitudes taken up by the girls are conventional and their exact meaning depends upon their context. But a few poses are immutable in significance and of these is the *anjali* or Great Salutation which always means homage, deference and admiration.

An attitude is taken up at a roll of the orchestra and kept until another roll gave the signal for change.

Something of bird-totems may be enshrined and preserved in these sacred ballets. The girls' exquisite grace is not unlike that of aquatic birds flying at sundown . . . and then, that swaying, staccato

[1] But even in the royal ballets the tiaras for the subsidiary roles are of gilded *cuir bouilli* (as were the crests of medieval European knights) or even of cardboard set with bits of looking-glass. For the onlooker, the effect is just as sumptuous as when real gold and jewels are worn and the burden upon the little dancer is much less heavy. All the ornaments worn in the ballet can be seen reproduced upon the Khmer bas-reliefs except the *mkot* which seems to have been a seventeenth-century borrowing from Siam. The Khmer crowns are flaming, seven-pointed affairs. In the Royal Treasure are some ballet-crowns of gold studded with diamonds and worth from £3,000 to £4,000 *gold* (i.e., say from £12,000 to £16,000 paper) apiece. The sequins, the baubles and bangles of the modern Cambodian dancers' costumes may be, in part, at least, imitated from Portuguese models imported in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But the fully-dressed dancing-girl (as opposed to the almost nude dancers of the Khmer sculptures) is a Siamese convention, owing much, doubtless, to northern and remotely Chinese influences.

march in Indian file. Heads elegantly stiff on slightly flexed necks. Arms outstretched. And the short steps, and the fastidious march as of wading-birds seeking their prey in shallow waters. . . .

The fingers curved back incredibly far, the fingers themselves elongated by golden nail-sheaths . . . so delicate and bird-like . . . the flexed knees and legs held apart . . . and the gestures of birds' wings.

And there is the same ethereal, airy quality about the dancing even when the girls are posturing out the imposing *kbach puthum*—The March of the Monkey Warriors.

The dancers often fall into the Pose of Offering. The legs are bent and held slightly apart. The thumb and index finger grasp a lotus or a garland of flowers while the other fingers are flexed backward over the hand—on the bas-reliefs of the Bayon you may see scenes of dancers posturing thus.

The gestures tell the story. A hand to the head and the other on the belt indicate sadness. A weeping princess catches each tear at the end of her lovely fingers and flicks it from her. The expression of emotions is decomposed and recomposed. A flower is plucked with divine complication and intricate symbolism. Each movement of opening the corolla is ritualized, glorified, sanctified. The princess delicately rubs her knee. It may be because ants have crawled upon her. Or it may be because she has been asperged with dew. You must follow closely the unfolding of the mime in order to learn the explanation or the fine shade of subtlety will be lost upon you.

Joy, sorrow, shame, anger, ecstasy, supplication, fear, love, desire and hatred are transmuted into the domain of dreams. The motives, passions and credulities of men are immaterialized and seen as through an enchanted mist, timeless, ageless and placeless.

The Divine Dancers are created by a discipline. Concerted and rhythmic action lends them nobility and majesty. What intelligence the dancer may possess, what character she may have are overwhelmed completely by the re-creation of her art.[1]

An insignificant girl is transfigured. Her face takes on an antique and immobile gravity. Her gestures seem noble and easy, for, like those of ladies, such manners have been learned early and in a hard

[1] The dancers are illiterate wenches whose prodigiously developed memory serves them as intelligence. Out of seventy-five actresses of the Royal Ballet in 1927, four only could read and two, with difficulty, write. And of eleven ballet-mistresses at the same time, only one could both read and write. The relatively high percentage of literacy among Cambodian men is due to their lessons in the monastic-schools.

way. Her gestures are effortless and inevitable, not those of a lady only, those of a princess, of a goddess. . . .

Do you remember that picture in the Louvre showing Gabrielle d'Estrées and the *duchesse de* Villars standing naked to their waists in a bath while the *duchesse* pinches between her thumb and fore-finger a nipple of Gabrielle's breasts? The faces of the two young women are youthful, grave, beautiful, expressionless and divinely distant . . . so seem the visages of the Cambodian dancers.

For hours they posture, princes and princesses, kings and queens, giants, servitors and demons. They fight and love. They admire and weep. All the gestures of our humanity are re-created in art while the artists themselves remain intact and superhuman.

These are the dramas to make you more sensitive than you are. To augment your mood. To enable you to create your own art, your own world of dreams, the only reality.

It seems that the Cambodians are moved to a deep and insurgent eroticism by the slow movements of the dance and by the subtle contrasts between the symbol and the things symbolized. To us Westerners the whole dance may appear rather chaste. . . .

The waving fingers, the quite impassive faces, the swaying figures, the eyes as vague as those of Gods or of opium-smokers.

The ballet is endless for when it ceases you feel that it has not stopped but has been veiled away from you. Endless but not monotonous.

Les fleurs d'une des plus belles traditions qui soient encore au monde.[1]

[1] Georges Groslier.

CHAPTER I

'Il y a dans chaque siècle, même dans les plus éclairés, ce qu'on peut appeler, à juste titre, l'esprit du temps, c'est à dire une sorte d'atmosphère qui passera, mais qui, pendant sa durée, trompe tout le monde sur l'importance et sur la vérité même de la plupart des opinions dominantes.'

JOUBERT—*Pensées.*

THE transition into Cambodia is sudden.

You bowl along a road, smooth, dusty, interminable.

It is flat and it is green on either side of you. Villages embowered in trees and shrubs. Streams running grey-brown among the verdure. Rice-fields. Rice. The food of half the human race. You have nine hundred varieties of it in Indo-China alone. There is the hard, the fluvial, the mountain and the sticky. . . .

You cross yet another stream and you are in a new world.

Jungle borders the pink highway. Purple hyacinths dot the marshes. Flowers—dull red and blue. And tiger-lilies shooting upright.

The countryside is less cultivated than was that of Cochin-China's over-populated land. Now, you are in a park sprinkled with sugar-palms, their boles shaped like champagne-bottles.

The huts are perched upon stilts as in the South Seas' islands.

The writing upon the sign-posts is no longer that of Chinese characters, but here we have a dashing alphabetical script distantly related to our own. You are among a people not using images to recall concepts, but employing signs to recall sounds. . . .

There are no more jostling graves in the fields. This is a land where men's bodies are burned. And people who burn their dead are accursed of the anthropologists. There is no comparative material to go on. However, the corpses of infants and of some criminals are still interred by the Cambodians who, in ancient days, slaughtered slaves and relations of dead men and buried their corpses under the threshold to sanctify and to stabilize the home.

Cremation, the Cambodians of old, adopted most probably from their Indian mentors. And incineration was practised by the Indus

Valley people over four thousand years ago. Burning the dead is a very ancient Indian habit. . . .

The few men and women you pass seem to be reposing, and often under the shade of the fret-work salas or rest-houses common by the roadside.

You are not long without seeing the brilliant yellow roofs and twisted eave-finials of the temples and near them, or strolling under umbrellas, are the shaven-headed, saffron-robed monks. They look at you without prejudice.

The children, naked and plump, fling their arms about, grin and chuck stones at your car when they dare. They are not alarmingly serious as are Chinese infants, nor are they sickly-sullen in the Annamese way.

The Cambodians are dark—dark brown—but hardly so dark as many Indians of the south or even of the north. Despite his colour, the Cambodian is, compared with the Annamese and Chinese, a man like ourselves in body and in muscle. He gets fat and heavy or thin and scraggy in our way.

Yes, he is just another human being, or so you think at first. He is a man who laughs, frowns, is insolent when he thinks he can get away with it, he is lazy, fairly good-natured—perhaps mostly through laziness and climate. He suffers from no testosterone poisoning, nor do his women twitter. . . .

On the whole a greedy man too, but one unable or unwilling to serve his greed by long-sustained effort. A man showing signs of emotion upon his face and betraying his anxiety by shaking hand or sweating forehead—sometimes.

Of like nature with ourselves.

If you step aside from the main roads, the women and girls will be, as in Bali, naked to the waist, but the Cambodians' breasts often swell up monstrously and then shrivel and wither to a goat's udder. Of like nature with ourselves.

The high, firm, shapely breasts so often retained for long years by Chinese, Annamese and some Indonesian women of the islands, are rare enough in Cambodia. It is the curve of the breast-bone which maintains the breasts. Among peoples of flat sternum the dugs sag. In these matters, thus, we may say that our Cambodians might be nothing else than dark Nordics . . . none of the indecent, arrogant nipples and shapely paps such as those shameless Mediterranean wenches show. . . .

For me no illustration or picture of the Cambodian scene is

more revealing than a painting many may find so subjectively fantastic as to leave them almost—perhaps not quite—indifferent. I mean *La Charmeuse de Serpents* of the *douanier* Henri Rousseau and now in the Louvre.

The gigantic, heart-shaped, jade-green leaves, the jungle-richness without the jungle-chaos, the never distant waters, still, clear, glassy-deep; the sword-blade grass, the trees of proportions unfamiliar, the glossiness, the timelessness . . . even the unknown bird, half-pelican, half-dodo . . . the slowly swerving, plump, friendly serpents . . . the charmer herself with glaring white eyes and body darker from the shadows.

Inevitable, improbable, familiar.

The only truth is sincerity. Artists who write or paint what they experience reveal the only veritable reality, that existing for one man. Yours or mine is a one-man's world. The re-creation effected by art may, however, aid us to enjoy our own world more fully. All of which may mean little except that when I look at Rousseau's *Charmeuse* I realize in myself what the Indians hold to be the significance of a work of art, namely the augmentation of a mood so that we become more sensitive than we are. . . .

Your car slithers down to the last ferry. You get out to wait for the boat. A youthful Cambodian slowly sidles up on a 'Stop Me And Buy One' sort of tricycle. His excellent ginger-beer is imported from Singapore. The local seltzer tastes like that vile concoction known as 'Tonic Water.'

A gently inquisitive monk smiles from the shade of the heart-shaped, jade-green leaves. His acolyte guards the green umbrella while picking his nose and scratching his pubis. Through the trees glitters the bright yellow of the pagoda. The upflung finials of the roof are so daring and extravagant that they must be elephant's trunks or cobras poised to strike.

You may so pass an hour of sunset, while the men grow darker from the shadows, while the cobras of the roof swerve slowly in the dusk. There, beyond the sword-blade grass, in still, clear, glassy-deep waters the Cambodian girls are bathing naked to-day as they did seven hundred years ago when they excited Chou Ta-Kwan, the Chinese chronicler.

And around you are the tree-branches smooth and bent bearing heart-shaped leaves like those stylized lindens in northern coats-of-arms, or the hearts of Colleoni's blazon that were canting testicles until men puritanically reversed them . . . or the great fig-leaves

of the *ficus religiosa* the holy Tree of Knowledge in the Buddhist legend, but a holy tree whose thick, white milky or sperm-like sap marked it as sacred countless ages before the Buddha preached under its shade.

> 'Any occupation, art or science which makes the body or soul or mind of the freeman less fit for the practice and exercise of virtue, is vulgar. Wherefore we call those arts vulgar which tend to deform the body, and, likewise, all paid employments, for they absorb and degrade the mind.'
>
> ARISTOTLE.

The Knoll of the Lady Penh.

Insensibly you slip into Phnompenh. There are no grubby suburbs. No ring of misery encircles the place. In this novel Indo-China, so different from the Cochin-China only an hour or so behind you, men seem rather rare and therefore valuable animals. In most lands of the Far East nothing is cheaper than a man.

Phnompenh, capital of the Cambodian realm, was, sixty years ago, a nipa-thatch and bamboo village straggling along the banks of a river. Above the low, dull mass of the huts rose a few sharp, pointed cones of temple and monastery, grey, gold or white against the brilliant sky.

The main street of this shapeless settlement was bordered on one side by a row of flimsy stalls, ramshackle huts and patches of jungle, while, opposite, there strung along a jumble of sampans, floating warehouses and hovels all swaying with the flow of the waters.

The new garden-city of Phnompenh has curled round the old town so that to reach a jostling, lively but not sordid kernel, you pass through nothing but wide, swept, sandy avenues, tree-shaded and lined with villas patched crimson and purple by bright blossoms. It is all so rural and gently unpretentious that before you know where you are you have measured the breadth of the capital.

There is little traffic. The Cambodians saunter along in the shade. At a distance you cannot tell the men from the women, for they are often dressed alike. Their hair is cropped to a bob, their faces are uninterested, calm and, indeed, at first sight rather stupid.[1]

[1] In Phnompenh many of the men and women wear the national *sampot* and a short, bolero-like jacket. The *sampot* is a scarf-like length of stuff girt around the waist and then caught up between the legs and fastened behind in such a manner as to produce the effect of rather full and sharply cut riding-breeches. *Sampots* may be of plain cotton stuff or of most richly woven silk fabrics gleaming with gold thread and gorgeous, subdued colour.

Your avenue is crossed by another as wide and rural. You swerve to the left and through gardens and parks make for Government House.[1]

I had letters for the Resident-General. My Annamese chauffeur brought the car round with a sumptuous scrunch on the gravel. The driver's job was done. He would offer no advice. His orders were to deliver me from Saigon to Phnompenh. He had done as he was bid.

Moreover, he could speak no Cambodian and pretended to understand little, if any, French. He was, just like myself, in a foreign land and he showed he was an alien by an indifference the Annamese so often feigns and so rarely feels.

There was no one about. The evening light looked cool but the air was as warm and soft as with us it is sometimes for a few fleeting moments at the end of a July day in southern England.

Into the shadows from the monumental entrance-door a wide staircase rolled. At my third or fourth step, a grave figure, taller than you meet with among the Annamese, moved forward, bowed and murmured in halting, guttural French would I be pleased to follow him? I was.

His bare legs and feet were dark and as he stepped slowly upwards his soles showed lighter than his insteps.

The palace was quite empty until we reached a distant room whence the secretary-general of the *résidence* came to meet us.

In appearance the usual type of intelligent, peaky-faced, pale French civil servant of the better sort. But a man in manner and comportment subtly different from his colleagues in Saigon or Hanoi.[2]

A calmer man, a man accustomed to living among a slow-moving, unexcited people and a people not to be handled by shouting and menace. For the Cambodians, if at first contact seemingly dull, react to hustling by passive resistance and to expressions of anger by stolid silence. And under all lies hidden a passion which may explode as violently as that of the Malays when they run *amok*.

When we had talked plans, possibilities and projects—for my humble journey was being treated as seriously as an affair of state—

[1] I call it 'Government House' for that is what it looks like, but, strictly, it the *Résidence-Générale*, the palace of the Resident, since Cambodia is a protectora and not a colony.

[2] Saigon is the largest town in the whole of geographical Indo-China and it is the capital of Cochin-China, while Hanoi, the capital of the whole 'Indo-Chinese Union,' as the French formerly called their possessions here, lies in the north in Tongking.

the Cambodian apparitor was sent to fetch up the Annamese driver who, in true Annamese fashion, declared the instructions we gave to be irrealisable. My secretary-general turned on the heat. The chauffeur went off hinting that he would do as he was told.

He did not, of course. But both we Europeans felt the better for a little self-assertion.

The Cambodian usher, slipping from the shade, preceded us very slowly down the great flight of steps to the door. He moved no farther. His job is to walk up and down steps. A job, in Cambodia, quite fatiguing and not to be undertaken hurriedly.

Phnompenh is singularly unlike other towns modelled by the French in their overseas possessions. No planning. No opera house, no town hall, no *grand café*, no vast, flimsy buildings in the Monte-Carlo style.

We strolled over lawns and under pergolas to the country club—a real country-club though right in the town. Tennis courts with no players. Swimming-pools with no swimmers. A bar as large as an air-line terminal. We were alone after the steward had brought us a drink of limes. And the limes of Cambodia—you see few lemons east of Suez—give juice, it seems less musty than those of the Annamese lands or China.[1] . . .

The Resident-General was away in the country, making a tour of inspection . . . he was so very sorry to have missed me . . . but. . . .

Although Cambodia is, thank God, a sparsely peopled land, it is not quite so empty as I thought it was that evening. Everyone had gone home. I was much later than I ought to have been and my polite welcomer had just been sitting for hours waiting for me . . . Cambodia is a timeless land.

> '*Je vais me promener tous les jours parmi la confusion d'un grand peuple, avec autant de liberté et de repos que vous sauriez faire dans vos allées, et je ne considère pas autrement les hommes que j'y vois, que je ferais les arbres qui se rencontrent en vos forêts, ou les animaux qui y paissent. . . .*'
>
> DESCARTES—*Lettre à Monsieur de Balzac.*

Descartes, who passed more than half his adult life in the Low Countries, was careful to learn no word of Dutch lest he might lose

[1] The juice of fresh limes yields a drink, of course, very unlike what we call lime-juice. As the vitamin-content of limes is much less than that of lemons, do not rely upon them to supply you with what you should be getting from fresh vegetables and other fruits, of which you may eat fearlessly, if you have had an anti-typhoid shot not too long before.

the precious isolation he enjoyed by residing among a people who could not speak with him.

Thus, Descartes, with modest means, acquired the most envied privilege of the rich—that of having no unwanted contacts with those whom we hypocritically call our fellows.

It is much more fear of promiscuous and spiritually degrading contacts than fear of danger which makes many men flee those enterprises demanding the sacrifice of all privacy and therefore of all integrity.

Not a few would far rather face alone great hazards than lesser ones in a crowd.

It was violet dusk when we sauntered from the country-club out into the avenues. As my bags had been carried to some hotel whose name and address I had, I could not dare to keep my secretary-general any longer, but wandered off alone.

Few experiences are more pleasing than those of rambling in an evening's warmth around a town new to you, where you know no one and where you are unknown.

The *phnom* or knoll, giving its name to the city, is not far from where I parted from my cool, collected and courteous Frenchman.

There it rose, crowned with a *stupa*[1] shaped as a gigantic hand-bell. Broad steps, shallow and not steep, score the mound to its base. At the foot, and on either side, the balustrades rear up into huge, fan-shaped seven-headed cobras. Here and there on the lightly-wooded hill are other smaller *stupas* with delicate, needle spires. Temple buildings, pale blue in the moonlight, cover the terraced summit.

Surfaces are, here and there, filigreed with slightly waving shrubs and bushes. Strung from the eaves or floating from slender masts oscillating metal tablets tinkle an aerial music.

Nearby, in globular blue cages, tigers yawn in the bright night. Their stench, hot and metallic mingles with the dry, cool sandal-wood perfume from the temple's incense-sticks. Thin, vaporous wisps of smoke curl out from before images of the Blessed One whose path to Enlightenment, says the legend, lay past a grim scene of tigers mauling their prey.

[1] A *stupa* is the cone-shaped structure so common in the lands of the *Little Vehicle*. The *stupa* is a modified form of the hemispherical cairn, *kurgan* or *tumulus* whose use goes back to New Stone Age times. At Sanchi in northern India the *tope* or tumulus may be seen in its early form which is reproduced in the imperial tombs of China, Japan and Annam. The *stupa* is no longer a tomb in the strict sense of the word (as is the tumulus) but a reliquary. The *tope* is a grave. The *stupa* is a shrine.

Near the base of the *Phnom* is a monstrous stone slab perpetrated by one Rivière to commemorate the return to Cambodia of the Battambang and Siem-Reap provinces. To the left is a clumsy rifleman with a French flag. In the centre what was intended to be a statue of His Majesty King Sisowath. To the right are dancers—*kruong-lakhon*—offering flowers.[1] It is a sobering creation worthy to be set alongside some of those which we have inflicted upon former subject peoples. There is that 'column of immense height crowned by the Star of India rising from a Lotus' which, though paid for by an Indian magnate, was designed and built to British plan. Thank God, the French did not attempt any New Delhi in their domains.

KRONG CHADOMUKH MONGKOL SOKKALA KAMPUCHEATHIPDEI SEREISOTHOR PARAVA INTAPUTTA BOREI RATTHARACHASEMA MOHANOKOR

That is:

> The Capital of the Four Faces, Happy Mistress of all Cambodia, Fortunate, Noble Town of Indraprasthra, Frontier of the Kingdom.

Such was the imposing title King Ponhea Yat gave to his new town when he founded it in 1434.

Legend has it that about the year 1370 a woman, whose hut lay on the slopes of the knoll now crowned by the pagoda of Phnompenh, hauled in, during the time of the flood-waters, a floating log she thought would do well for firing. When she split the wood with her axe, she saw embedded in the timber, an image of the Lord Buddha.

This image she set up under a shelter upon the knoll's summit (there where the temple now is) and well out of reach of the waters.

Tradition tells that as far back as 1372 a sanctuary was built around the holy image. And, near the shrine there grew up, as with us in medieval Europe, a village whose men and women throve and flourished on pilgrimage. The settlement took on the name 'Phnom-Penh.' *Phnom* is Cambodian for a hill or knoll and *penh* is apparently, a woman's proper name. Thus, *Phnompenh* would mean the 'Hill

[1] How divorced is sound from sense for all except those who have learned to associate them. To our ears can any words convey less the delicate, fragile loveliness of the Cambodian dancers than the harsh syllables of KRUONG-LAKHON? Yet to the Cambodians the words are evocatory of the sacred ballet and all it has meant for the Khmers.

of (the Lady) Penh.' But the whole story smacks a little of what the Germans call *Volksetymologie* and the legend may have been woven around the name, rather than the name derived from the legend.

The real history of Phnompenh begins in 1434 when King Ponhea Yat chose the site as the place of his new capital.

The Cambodian kings had, under Siamese pressure, already abandoned the magnificent palaces and temples of Angkor.

But as the permanent capital of Cambodia, Phnompenh is modern.

The town was the royal residence from 1434 to 1439 and then not again until 1813—and a few years afterwards. It is only since 1867 that the city has been metropolitan.

Phnompenh was obviously an auspicious place.

It lies at the intersection of four navigable streams, the so-called Tonlé Chado-Mukh or 'River of the Four Faces,' that is, Four Arms. So, Phnompenh was early named the 'Four-Faced City'—a most favourable designation (for name and appellation are magic things producing results) recalling the Hinduist deity Shiva, and moreover, the Great Vehicle Buddhist divinity Avalokiteçvara, Lord Protector of the West. . . .

So, Phnompenh was predestined to be a happy seat for the sacred sovereign with whose personal welfare is bound up the prosperity of his realm.

And the Knoll of the Lady Penh, clothed with park-trees and verdure, still rises ninety feet above the level of the city and still is crowned with its grey, archaic-looking *stupa* which, it may be, still encloses the sacred image the woman hauled in from the waters But the temple dates only from 1806 and since it was badly burned in 1881, it is not, in its present form, more than half a century old.

I must have wandered off eastwards down the broad avenue Doudart de Lagrée (named after the consular official who negotiated the first Franco-Cambodian protectorate treaty) and although I skirted many walls and glimpsed many spires and roofs, only one other memory than that of the Phnom stands out clearly from the dream of my evening.

It is the image of the Botum Votdei.

A soaring white pinnacle, still recognizably resembling distant Indian prototypes, recalling in its glittering purity the great pagoda of Pagan in Burma, the old capital of the country where Indian models were interpreted by the light of traditions both Indonesian and Chinese.

By now it was full night, luminous and silvery. The temple stood out ethereal and unearthly. A ring of small stupas surrounds the central mass. You might say that the Botum Votdei bears much the same sort of relation to the Indian temples as does St. Basil's in Moscow to Santa Sofia in Constantinople. But the Cambodian pinnacled pyramid is something far more graceful and delicate and inevitable than the crazy, barbarian, gorgeous Russian church.

The Botum Votdei breaks into countless finials each soaring above the other in harmony. The fane is a great white flame tipped with a seven-tiered tiara of golden parasols. And this tiara is reproduced on lower levels by the gilded summits of tall maypoles whose streamers bear oscillating metal tablets sighing softly day and night.

In the mauve moonlight, the fanned heads of the rearing serpents, the grotesque guardian lions in the Attitude of Royal Ease, seem to sway slightly and lend the whole vision an impermanence belied only by the sharp, black openings leading into the sanctuary.

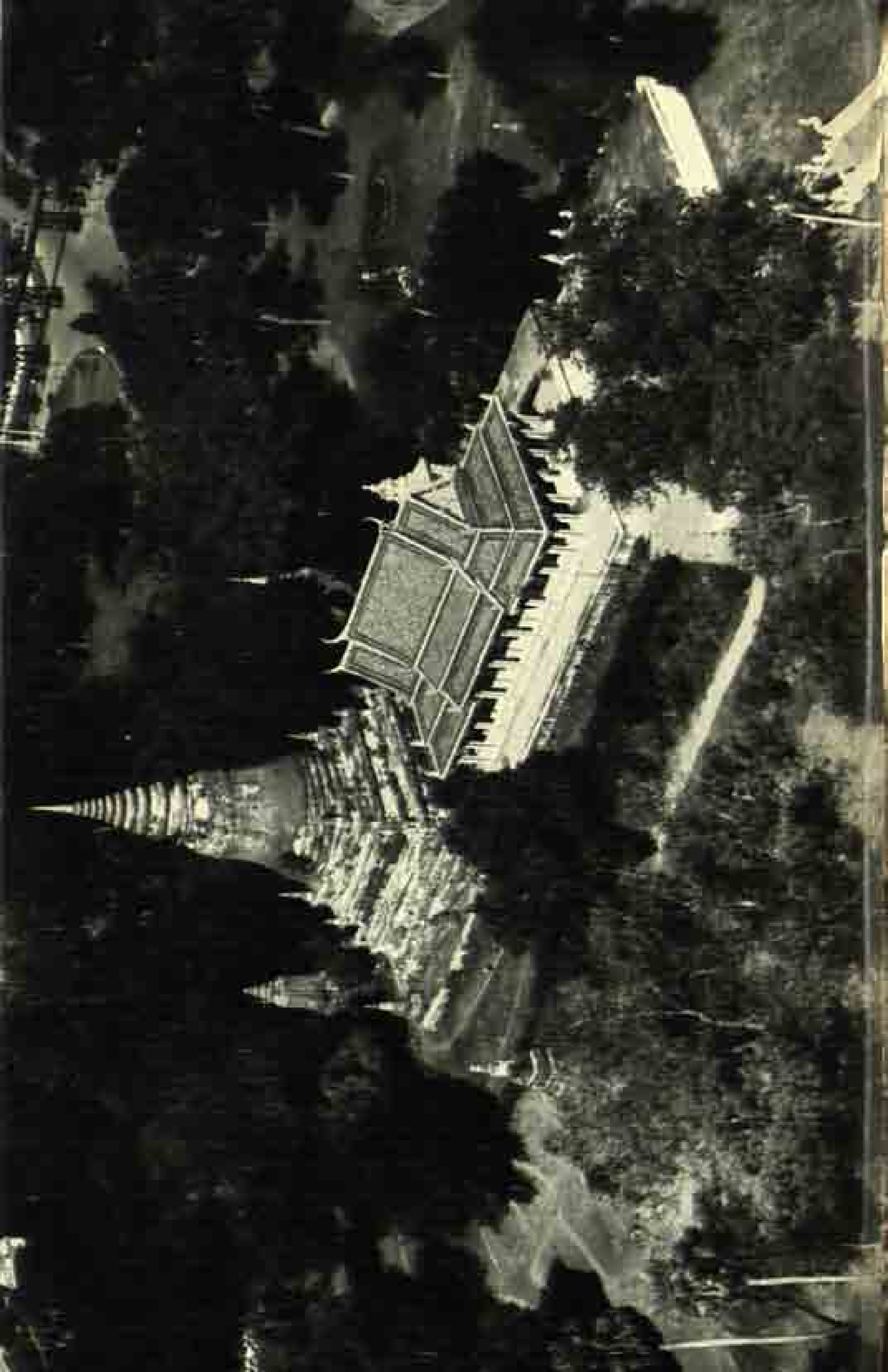
The pagoda ripples away at its base into the slender foliage of spreading trees, while areca-palms bend their tall heads, rustling while they fan the shrine.

I must have then walked round behind the Royal Palace and past the Museum and the Vat Unnalom where is the residence of the Buddhist patriarch and the headquarters of the Mohanikay sect. Here, in 1452, King Ponhea Yat put up a mighty *stupa* to preserve a most precious relic—a Hair (*loma*) of the Buddha's *urna* or hairy wart in the centre of his forehead. But of these things I can remember little, though I know that I was quite alone until I reached the streets toward the river and that I found my hostelry without having to ask the way.

I was not sumptuously lodged. For some reason or other, I have always found the hotels of Phnompenh quite full. Perhaps the porters and reception-clerks do not like the look of me. Anyway, there was no room for me at the 'Royal Palace' at the 'Grand Hôtel,' or even at the humbler 'Petit-Paris.' My bags had been dumped in a pub by the riverside.

It was rather a nice pub. The inn-keeper from Marseilles had caught the Cambodian manner. I might have been staying at the place for a month. No questions asked. No forms to fill in. The dinner just appeared. No flourishing of an elaborate menu-card. No bellowed regrets that every damned thing you had chosen was off. And there was nothing much Cambodian about the food. Not





even a river-fish stuffed with red peppers and swimming in curry sauce that so often forms the *hors d'œuvre* in Cambodia. Those who recover from the violent sweat and the hiccups may then get down to something really tasty. . . .

At the foot of a steep staircase a vague figure hinted that *that* was the door.

When I revisited Ravenna, after many years of experiences making me so different from the youth I was when I first wandered, wondering and puzzled by the Byzantine basilicas, I was lodged in that ancient city-castle that is now an hotel, and was once, they say, the home of Francesca da Rimini. The embrasures of the windows are perhaps six foot deep and when I unlatched the solid shutters a leaning honeycombed tower was glittering in the moonlight against a lambent sky, while the shadows were richer than I think I have ever seen. And while I glanced from the antique, medieval bedroom's shade to the living scene without, there came circling, fluttering down hundreds of pigeons incandescent in the brilliant night and changed to dull clods in the shadows. It was a shower of gold dying as fireworks will. . . .

Now also at Phnompenh the moonlight was very bright. The lapping water clucked against the barges. Now and then a gleaming man would bend the spring-boards joining hull to quay. A dark canoe carried a large, silvery cage of dark birds. Bales and bags and clusters of cocoa-nuts and infants cluttered entrance to the mat-roofed lean-to's. From the mat props hung signs. Chinese signs in bold characters. Proper names. Advertisements. The pompous auspicious titles the Chinese need and like. The 'Golden Dragon's Abode' was a rickety barge. A ramshackle sampan the 'Heavenly King's Threshold.'

These covered barges and sampans are shop, store, opium-den, family residence, workshop, gambling den and/or brothel.

But there are at Phnompenh no flower-boats as blue and white and briskly business-like as at Canton. Even the venal amours procured by the complaisant Chinese are, in Cambodia, rather blurred and vague and secret.

The Gift of the River

Cambodia, as Egypt, is the Gift of the River. You see, also, at Phnompenh a curious thing. For some months in the year the current runs south and for others it runs north. Mysterious and magic occurrences celebrated with much ritual and water-festival.

Phnompenh: The Phnom *seen from the Air* (*p.* 29)

The Festival of the Waters' Ebb and of Salutations to the Moon

The Mekong is another Nile.

In the month of Asoch[1] the waters of the Great Lake begin to flow down towards the Mekong main stream after months of upward current.

On an auspicious day, His Majesty the King takes up his residence in his floating palace moored off the river banks near Phnompenh. It is a strangely Oceanian-looking wooden structure, surrounded by a pillared veranda and a double roof terminating in two gabled ridges. It would not be out of place in New Guinea or the Fijis.[2]

His Majesty is publicly purified in lustral water poured over him from gold-adorned conch-shells by the Brahmins of the palace. When the King is purified, then the whole land and its inhabitants are also purged of . . . what? Well, of sin in general. This pre-Buddhist, antique ceremony deals with matters hanging over from the most remote past, from a time when sin was non-observance or ill-observance of the rites which have magic force . . . rites earlier than the classical Brahmanism of India, rites whose origins go back to Old Stone Age times.

Then his Majesty takes up his place on the Royal Barge, long and narrow, the stern scrolled and the prow darting up and forward like the barbed, undulating tail of a great fish. The barge is canopied for its whole length while amidships is a three-windowed cabin containing the throne of the sovereign. Fore and aft fly the royal standards of Cambodia, the stylized trident. . . .

A delegate of the monarch, or sometimes the king himself, cuts the Sacred Thong which, in symbol, has hitherto retained the waters from their backward flow . . . just as the mayor's lady or one of our muddling masters cuts the bit of ribbon over the new bridge. . . .

Towards sunset the regatta begins and three thousand and more oarsmen shoot their high-prowed canoes through the waters. The scene is again most Oceanian as the dark, serrated lines of the boats slip over the silver-grey river. And the scene fades into night until it is lit up more luminous than ever by the full moon. Then comes the procession of floating fires, canoes and sampans supporting catafalques glittering with thousands of lanterns reflected in strange

[1] November-December.

[2] Of course, the buildings of Oceania (whose settlement by men is relatively recent) are constructed to traditional models brought, ages ago, from the mainland.

distorted streaks and blobs and points of living colour on the lapping surface of the stream. The guttural shouts of the coxswains mingle with the shouts of the crowd on the banks, a crowd as excited and partisan as any at boat-race or football game.

And this crowd twinkles and glimmers gold and silver in the night, for all the girls of Phnompenh are wearing their shimmering spangled silks. . . .

Mekong

The mighty Mekong, which upon the map looks as though it were a broad highway scoring Indo-China from north to south, is, however, a stream almost impossible to navigate since it is set with whirlpools, cataracts, huge boulders and cascades.

The river of Cambodia is not less than two thousand eight hundred miles long, sixteen hundred of which are in the Laos and Cambodia. The Mekong springs from the rocks of Tibet fifteen thousand feet up. In the jumbled and twisted area of northern Indo-China, the river flows, generally speaking, due south, but twice it swerves sharply to the east.

From Vientiane, in the Lower Laos, southwards, the Mekong cuts through a sandstony plateau while running parallel roughly to the Annam ridge.

At Phnompenh, the river splits into three arms, the Tonlé-Sap (communicating with the Great Lake), an eastern branch which keeps the Mekong name, and a western branch, known as the Bassac.

Farther on, and nearer to the coast, the river's waters mingle with those of the Vaico, the Dong-nai and the Saigon river to form a water-world of canals, streams, marshes, meres and islets.

It is in the Mekong delta that the Indo-China monsoon breaks with its greatest regularity. The river's flood-time recurs, year by year, with almost mathematical precision. The waters rise rapidly by as much as forty-five or fifty feet.

In June, under the influence of the upstream waters, the Tonlé-Sap reverses its flow. The Great Lake and a vast area around it are flooded. From October to December much of central Cambodia disappears beneath the waves of a sweet-water sea. Ebb and flow are so regular that the men of the plains never build dykes or attempt to control the flood, they just move out or in with the spread or shrinking of the flood.

Now we can see why Cambodian houses are perched upon stilts.

And such is the nature of the stream, beset with rapids (formed

by breaks between plateaus of different altitudes and different sorts of rocks) that two stretches only of the river are open to regular navigation—the reach between Vientiane and Savannakhet and the lower reaches from Kratié to the sea.

These two lengths are separated (between Kemmarat and Preapatang) by successions of rapids and by the impassable barrier of the Kone cataracts through the Dangrek Range.

Goods river-borne between Saigon in Cochin-China and Luang-Prabang in the Upper Laos have to be portaged no less than five times.

'Dans ce pays, ce sont les femmes qui s'entendent en commerce. Aussi, un Chinois qui en arrivant là-bas prend femme profite-t-il en plus de ses aptitudes commerciales.'

CHOU TA-KWAN.

By day, and after a night's sleep, Phnompenh is not, of course, so alluring, mysterious, a place as it was that evening of my arrival. Still, had I to choose where I would spend a few months in Indo-China I should pick upon Phnompenh.

There are no taxis, no cabs, no trams, no buses, no theatres and no consulates. No consuls and no British colony—did not Talleyrand give as advice to all travellers to avoid compatriots?—no clubs, no newspapers. There is a railway station but the trains run to nowhere in particular and no one thinks of taking them.[1] There is an episcopal 'palace' but no cathedral, though the fine covered market might be a Cambodian Albert Hall. The avenues blaze with bougainvillea. Flowery beds border the canals cut to drain the land before it can be laid out. Song birds twitter in the branches. Crickets rasp in the heat.[2] The nearest things to coffee-houses are the banks.

They are lofty, cool and dim. In pushes a Chinese naked to the waist and holding aloft a wad of bank-notes . . . the oily Annamese cook in white tunic and trousers, the saffron-clad monks, the Chinese procuresses, their lean, lank hair twisted to a horse's tail.

The sweating colonials bellow, and buck. . . .

[1] The line runs south-west of the Great Lake and as far as Mongkolborey towards the Siamese frontier, but there is no link-up with the Siamese railway head at Aranha, neither is there rail communication between Phnompenh and Saigon.

[2] Phnompenh has, they say, a population of over 100,000. The town is divided into three main sections (a) the European quarter; (b) the so-called *village catholique* mostly inhabited by quite un-Catholic Annamese; (c) the Cambodian and Chinese zone to the south and centring on the Royal Palace.

Outside, in the streets' shimmer are American cars, but no Americans. An old Ford flivver jerks along towing a wobbly, gaudy dragon—the hearse and bier of a departed Chinese.

On the kerb of the pavement, the Cambodian chauffeurs peel their soles and pick their toes while waiting in the cars' sparse shade for their masters.

Down towards the waterside the roads are lined with hundreds and hundreds of small stores and shops. It is a quieter scene than in China or the Annamese lands and the streets are so wide that you sometimes have the impression of being rather in a country market-town on fair day than in a permanent city. . . .

Flaky rice and fried bananas slung in baskets from shoulder-poles. . . .

Cambodian women, for the most part rather heavy and lymphatic-looking, with teeth stained black with betel[1] and close-cropped hair, do not so monopolize business and barter as do their sisters in Burma, but they are the mainstay of Phnompenh's retail trade.

For all her vanity and, indeed, puerility, and her jealousy of her rank, the Cambodian woman is, as a rule, attractive, quicker-witted than her men, and attentive to her interests and those of her family.

Official statistics are, generally speaking, one of the most dreary forms of fairy-story. Nothing is easier than to fake 'official' figures, no outside check is possible. Yet we still affect to believe what governments publish concerning the state of their affairs. From census figures to the gold-production statistics (when they were still published) of the Soviet Union we may take all this mass of propaganda with a large grain of salt.[2]

Still, Phnompenh is a great mart and port for the riches of Cambodia and for regions farther north. Some exports go directly overseas but most pass through Cochin-China and are there mingled with local goods and get abroad under none knows what denomination.

[1] The blood-red mouth and darkened teeth of the lower-class Cambodian woman are unattractive enough, but—although the teeth look black they are not intentionally stained or 'lacquered' as until a few years ago they were in the Annamese lands. Staining the teeth black was a custom of old Japan and even of more antique China. The custom crops up in different parts of the world and, as far as I know, has been the subject of no close study. Doubtless, the practice is, in its origin, associated with the whole complex of ritual mutilations.

[2] Why we should be expected to believe what we are told about population and industrial production when no one gives any credence to 'authoritative' information about armies and war-material output, is not clear. It is just as necessary to deceive the enemy (i.e. outsiders both at home and abroad) about imports, exports and numbers of the people as it is to conceal the truth about 'new weapons' and military establishments.

It is quite impossible to keep accurate or even approximately accurate check on trade movements when most of the commerce is in the hands of the resourceful Chinese.[1]

'Beauty is a great virtue—perhaps the only virtue.'

RENAN.

The Phnompenh Museum is a red temple in which, when I last saw him in 1939, Georges Groslier, a little ailing from long residence and hard work in the East, still carried on, running the museum and fostering ancient handicrafts of the country.

He stuck to his post until the Japanese arrived. Most concerned at the state of his health, they removed him to a Japanese hospital for special treatment.

He was, of course, never seen again, but his family received a nice, neat little box of *hinoki* wood bearing a label with his name inscribed upon it. A covering letter indicated that the coffer contained Groslier's ashes. It was very much regretted that even the special treatment had failed to save his life.

Note the Japanese organization. No common, local wood used. Only *hinoki*, imported from Japan. It was even hinted by some that the little boxes arrived from Nippon already filled with ashes.

Things are what we think they are.

Groslier[2] described himself in his best-known book *Les Danseuses Cambodgiennes*, as *artiste-peintre*, but his reputation in the country to whose arts and crafts he devoted much of his life, will survive as that of the man who did more than any other to save and to revive the traditional handicrafts of the Cambodians. The ancient traditions of weaving, carving and gold- and silver-smithery withered with the decay of the realm, but until the end of the last century, the crafts of wood-carving, of inlay work, of jewellery fashioning and of the weaving of *sampot hol* or silken waist-sashes, lingered on.[3]

About twenty years ago the French decided to save what could be saved before the last artisans and craftsmen had died leaving no

[1] In the years just before the last war it was stated that about 400,000 tons of paddy; 300,000 tons of maize and 12,000 tons of latex were exported through Phnompenh as well as about 130,000 tons of dried fish and considerable quantities of pepper, hard-woods, cattle, hides, gums, spices and incense.

[2] He was Director of the Albert Sarraut Museum, head of the Service of Cambodian Arts and the author of several books including a (now somewhat out of date) guide to Angkor.

[3] The *sampot-hol* weaving was formerly a cottage-industry occupying whole families.

successors. So the 'Cambodian Corporations' were formed to encourage crafts throughout the country and, adjoining the museum, was set up an Industrial School where you may see the silkworm nursery with fat, pale-golden cocoons in grooved boxes . . . and there, out on the shaded veranda, backed by gigantic leaves, crouched upon a mat, is a girl in china-blue sampot and white bodice flecked with blue flowers. She is winding the yarn from rectangular spindle to ten-ribbed bobbin. Slowly, slowly, the crude spewed excrement ripples into glistening pale-daffodil thread. . . .

The splendid silks of Cambodia rival any in the East. Until recent years much of the dyed yarn was imported from India. The Cambodians weave their yarn into the most alluring fabrics melting to a thousand shades and shot with gold and silver thread.

The dyeing is a tedious and fastidious process since the threads are tinged several colours and each thread may bear half a dozen hues merging into one another along its length. The weaving of the polychrome strands demands a very cunning art.

You can buy lengths of stuff woven under your eyes and you can admire even more magnificent fabrics exposed in the Museum, but these iridescent, shimmering silks can only be enjoyed to the full when seen worn in the traditional way, on a fashionable bride or adorning the ladies of the Royal Household at Court ceremonies.

Les femmes s'habillent pour plaire aux hommes et pour déplaire aux femmes.

The oval, expressionless faces under the blue-black crop, intensify the sumptuous nobility of the fabrics. The skirt—by turns silvery-blue and golden-green. The bodice—salmon-pink glinting to crimson or old-rose. The sash of red-gilt and orange swathed around the waist. From the left shoulder to the right hip a bandolier of silver, emerald and gold.

And the girl will not be over-dressed. She will seem, indeed, hardly to be dressed at all. She is just robed, so that, at a gesture, she could, and would, slip out and stand naked with cool face and warm body.

The Cambodians are moved and secretly excited by such contrasts. The bustling, obvious advances of the European women they profess to hold chilling. . . .

The art of the Cambodian silversmith is admirable. A small box was being made before my eyes—the sort of thing they called a comfit-box in our eighteenth century. It was being carved and chiselled with garudas and dancers in high relief and adorned with

fine and significant designs geometrical and archaic. When it was finished I bought it—for about nine shillings—and I have it still.

All the objects of silverware Groslier sent to the San Francisco Fair were sold in the first week and he was at his wits' end to find enough pieces to satisfy the Americans' demand.

'. . . *toute origine, toute aurore des choses est de la même substance que les chansons et que les contes qui environnent les berceaux . . . le faux supporte le vrai, le vrai se donne le faux pour ancêtre, pour cause, pour auteur, pour origine, sans exception ni remède—et le vrai engendre ce faux dont il exige d'être soi-même engendré. Toute antiquité, toute causalité, tout principe des êtres sont inventions fabuleuses et obéissent aux lois simples de l'invention.*'

PAUL VALÉRY—'*Sur les Mythes et La Mythologie.*'

And then you can look at golden crowns and jewels, and masks, fearsome or archaic, though hardly so fine as the best the Japanese produced. There is a presentation of all the long story of Cambodian art from New Stone Age times, through the magnificent things inspired by India down to the lesser, though pleasing productions, of the last few centuries.

The Old Stone Age artefacts of Indo-China we may, for the present at least, ascribe to the Melanesoid (or even Australoid) populations whereas the New Stone Age tools seem to have been made and used by the Indonesoid peoples.[1]

Tools in cut-stone polished only on the cutting-edge, 'Bacsonian' and tanged axes (for hafting) are numerous at Samrongsen near Kompong Chhnang.[2]

Towards the end of the Indo-Chinese Neolithic age, there appeared a megalithic civilization—one associated with the construction of large-stone monuments—with the use of metal.[3]

During its Neolithic or New Stone Age, Indo-China was in part drawn into a maritime civilization which had spread over south-eastern Asia and Indonesia.

Of this New Stone Age culture, as far as we can see, some of the

[1] (*See* p. 133)

[2] At the south-eastern extremity of the Great Lake and on the Phnompenh-Battambang railroad.

[3] In the Laos the upright stones of the Sam-neua region and the 'jars' dotting the Plain of Jars (Xieng-Khounag) and the jars of Tranninh. In Cochin-China a fine dolmen was exhumed at Xuan-loc in 1928. No synchronism can, of course, be established between the Neolithic of Indo-China and that of Europe.

main features were, the use of irrigated rice-fields, of the domesticated ox and buffalo, of metals (mostly imported it would seem from China). Moreover these 'maritime' men practised rudimentary smelting themselves and they were skilful navigators.

The pottery from Samrongsen which we may see at the Phnompenh museum is often black or very dark brown. It is rather beautiful and archaic, and, in many cases shows designs like imprints of matting or basket-work and, in this, resembles the Yang-chao-ts'uen earthenware from northern China.[1]

This mound of Samrongsen was discovered as long ago as 1876 and it was explored by Mansuy some twenty years later. But, unfortunately, the hillock has been wretchedly excavated and it tells us, therefore, little or nothing of what we want to know. Had this (apparently unique) site been examined with care, we should now be in possession of a complete relative chronology for the culture-phases of most of the Neolithic and of all of the Bronze Age in southern Indo-China.

Samrongsen appears to have offered, indeed, a parallel upon a smaller scale to what Troy reveals for Anatolia and south-eastern Europe.

During the Bronze Ages much of Indo-China seems to have partaken of a wide-spread culture one of whose features may have been a strong differentiation between mountaineers on the one hand and coastal with riverain dwellers on the other.

It has been advanced that the highlanders were, in the main, men of bird-totem groups, while the lowlanders were generally of serpent-totem classification.

We must beware of straining the evidence and of forcing parallels between modern practice and remotely ancient evidence, but we shall be struck as we explore Cambodia by the ever-present

[1] In 1923 J. G. Andersson, the Swedish archæologist, discovered at Yang-chao in the basin of the Yellow River (Honan province) a Neolithic site dating probably from the third millennium before our era. In addition to the abundant stone industry many bowls of reddish earthenware decorated with geometrical designs in black were recovered. Sites yielding Yang-chao style pottery have been identified in the provinces of Shansi, Shensi and Kansu in the Chinese north-west. The 'Yang-chao' ware from the Kansu sites represents a more evolved stage of pottery. The bowls are often accompanied by globular jars decorated on the upper half of their bodies by designs painted in red and black—spirals, lozenges (Panshan about first quarter of second millennium before our era) lattices (Mach'ang possibly about middle of second millennium). In Honan, the Yang-chao type of pottery rather soon gives way to a fine, wheel-turned black earthenware whose varied forms served as models for the Shang dynasty bronzes. Menghin, the Austrian prehistorian, whose theories are often over-bold, would see a direct connection between the Chinese Neolithic culture of the north and that of Cambodia as represented at Samrongsen.

serpent symbolism and image and also by the almost certain bird-mimicry of the dances and, indeed, of the upturned aerial movements of Cambodian architecture and art.[1]

The Realm of Funan

From about the second century of our era there flourished in the south-east of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, a State which, by the third century, had swelled to an empire.

This realm, we know, under its Chinese name of Funan. And what characters we read (in modern Chinese pronunciation very different from that of fifteen hundred years ago) as *Funan* may, possibly, have been intended to represent nothing else than the Khmer (old Cambodian) word *vnam* which is the archaic form of the modern *phnom* or 'hill.' Hence, some have thought fit to call the Funan rulers the 'Kings of the Mountain.'

A few of the monuments set up by the Funan sovereigns have been recovered. There are three inscriptions in Sanskrit from the Plain of Reeds (*plaine des jones*) in the Mekong delta and from Bati, south of Phnompenh. These memorials confirm something of what the Chinese chroniclers tell us, but the Funanese relics we have are not more ancient than the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth centuries. Moreover, none of the (rather improperly) styled 'pre-Angkorian' sites in central and southern Cambodia can be safely ascribed to the Funanese.

This Empire of Funan was certainly of Indian culture. Sanskrit was the official language of the realm—but perhaps not to a greater extent than Latin was the language of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms existing in our land contemporary with the later phases of the Funan empire. It is not clear whether the Indian culture of Funan was sea-borne direct or whether it reached south-eastern Indo-China through 'Java' that is to say, the dominions of Çrivijaya in Sumatra and Java. It may be that Funan received some influences from north-western India and from Persia (i.e., Kushan and Sasanid). And it would appear that from the second to the sixth centuries the Funanese had ports (e.g., Kampot near Angkorborei) whose ships connected directly with the coasts of Malaya and Sumatra and beyond.

[1] It is, of course, possible that the culture-complexes which are represented in the Indus Valley (*see* p. 221) peoples of north-western India may have stretched out as far as Indo-China. If this was so some rather striking similarities between the cultures and customs of Indo-China and those of historical India would be due not so much to direct borrowing by Indo-China from India but to common origins. But these are only speculations.

However, for Funan as for all ancient communities, the saying, no doubt, holds good that the sea unites while the mountain divides. The Indian penetration of Indo-China coincided, indeed, with the development of coast-wise shipping.

The history of Indian overseas colonization is obscure. We shall not, however, in all probability, go far wrong if we regard the early Indian 'colonies' as having been trading stations or 'factories' comparable with those Europeans were to establish, later on and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, over all the East and in India itself.

With their trade, the Indians brought their cults and their culture which were so closely bound together.

Eventually, a number of Indian-patterned States was established. In these countries, the ruling classes were either partly of Indian descent or they were strongly Hinduized. These semi-Indianized realms fringed the sea-route to the Farther East. There were the States of Jaya and Ligor in the upper part of the Malay Peninsula. There was the Realm of Çrivijaya over parts of Sumatra and Java.

For a time the rulers of Çrivijaya were suzerains of the old Khmers and it was King Jayavarman II, as we shall see, who threw off the oke of the islanders.

The Indian-patterned State of Majapahit lasted in Java until the Moslem invasions of the fifteenth century. And these Moslem invaders came by sea, or rather over the ocean.

The greatest monuments of old Java antedate the best of the Khmer remains and the Mahayanist Buddhist pyramid of Borobudur may have been raised in the sixth century and therefore antedate the Khmer monument which we can with safety classify chronologically.

The land of Dvaravati, on the plain of the Menam (in what is now Siam) and the realm of Champa in modern Annam, were also strongly Indianized lands.

There were Indian traders at Pegu (southern Burma) in early Buddhist times and Indian Pala influences reached the Menam valley through Burma. But Indian culture seems to have taken a long time to travel by land and there is reason to think that the impulses which vivified Funan and, later on, ancient Cambodia, were seaborne.

There is no reason to suppose that the first Indian immigrants—merchants, missionaries and marauders—found, by the lower

Mekong's reaches any other than a fairly advanced Bronze Age culture such as is represented at Samrongsen.[1]

The capital of Funan bore the Indian name of Vyadhapura. Its site lies probably near the present-day village of Pre-krabas in Takeo and some forty miles south of Phnompenh.

The Chinese traveller Yi-tsing[2] wrote that the people of Funan first adored the *devas* (i.e. Brahmanic Gods) and that, later on, the Law of the Buddha spread and flourished among them. 'But, to-day a wicked king has completely destroyed it and there are no more any monks at all.' Yi-tsing was a Buddhist.

The rulers of Funan held sway over several feudatory states one of which was Chenla or Kambuja, to the north-east of the Cambodia we know. In 503 an embassy from the Kambuja ruler was sent to China to congratulate (the Chinese say bring tribute to) the founder of the Liang Dynasty. The principal offering was an image of the Buddha in coral. By the middle of the sixth century the Kambuja rulers were aggrandizing themselves at the cost of their nominal overlords.

About the middle of the seventh century of our era, Funan was overrun by the Khmers—as the people of Kambuja were called. In the following century Funan ceased to exist as a separate state.

The Realm of Chenla

The Khmer land of 'Chenla' whose feudatories struggled to independence and then to domination of their masters, had its capital at Çresthapura which lay, most probably, near the modern settlement of Vat Phu, over 250 miles to the north of Phnompenh and, indeed, outside the borders of modern Cambodia.

A legend runs that a 'Solar' dynasty was derived from the union of a Hindu Brahmin or sage, called Kambu, and an *apsara* or 'divine dancer' by name Mora. And the feudatory State of Kambuja would have taken its designation from the eponymous Kambu.

As far as we can see, this Kambuja lay along the reaches of the Mekong River and stretched from the Stung Treng region a good way north into what is now the Lower Laos. By tradition the first

[1] Regarding Samrongsen, *see* the illuminating article by R. v. Heine-Geldern in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 1945. The culture of the realm of Davaravati was either derived from or was much influenced by the 'Gupta' art and architecture of India, but in Indo-China that art developed very special features. The Mōn-language State of Dvaravati flourished from the sixth century onwards, but from the eleventh there is clear evidence of Khmer influence into what was to become a subject realm of the old Cambodian kings.

[2] Flourished 671-695 A.D.

Kambuja prince to throw off the Funan yoke was one Bhavavarman[1] who also ate into a good deal of Funan territory.

Thus, it may be, was founded the realm of the Khmers, ancestors of the present-day Cambodians. What the name Khmer may have meant is not clear, but that the Khmers were the forefathers of the Cambodians is certain from the close resemblance between the physical type of the Cambodians and that portrayed on the Khmer monuments.

You can set Cambodian man and boy and girl alongside sculptures of Angkor and get dual images as striking as those Eisenstein in 'Thunder over Mexico,' achieved with pre-Columbian Mexican carvings and living Mexicans.

The rulers and the aristocracy of the old Khmers may have shown a considerable Indian admixture, but the people, probably, much less. Indeed, the Khmer people must have looked much like those of their descendants to-day who do not show too much Chinese or Siamese ancestry. And it must have been a people physically very like the Khmers which formed the basis of the population of Funan, since, at the time of the Khmer conquest of their old masters there was no substitution of one population for another.

We may regard with considerable scepticism all the stories about 'Norman blood,' visible traces of Visigothic ancestry in modern Spain and the like. With few exceptions all the tales of conquest which are clear to us are tales of a small group of victors rapidly intermingling with the vanquished and imposing upon them a series of cultural elements which induce the formation of a new civilization. The 'Moors' or 'Arabs' of Moslem Spain were Spaniards converted to Islam, no different save for circumcision and dress from their Catholic adversaries and fellow-countrymen. But we feed and flourish on names.

That the modern Cambodian and the ancient Khmers were culturally linked is also evident. The Khmer monuments bear inscriptions not only in Sanskrit but also in ancient Cambodian which differs rather less from the everyday speech of Phnompenh than does the English of Chaucer from that spoken in London now.

[1] The word *varman* which appears so often in the proper names of the Khmer sovereigns means in Sanskrit (the ritual language of Mahayana Buddhism as well as of Brahmanistic Hinduism) 'breastplate' or 'buckler,' and hence 'protection.' Thus Indravarman is the 'Protected of Indra.' It will be noted that all the proper names we know from the inscriptions of Funan and early Kambuja are Indian and the inscriptions themselves are written in Sanskrit. Pali, the sacred and ritual, tongue of modern Cambodia, was imported with Hinayana or Little Vehicle Buddhism.

'The ideas we have of exterior bodies show rather the constitution of our own body than the nature of the exterior bodies.'

SPINOZA.

The Phnompenh Museum is a temple as well as a museum.

The Cambodians do not cease to reverence the images of the Master because they are gathered together into what we carelessly call an Abode of the Muses.

The Buddhas are girt about from left shoulder to the right hip with scarves of the liturgical yellow from deepest orange to palest daffodil. Flower offerings are set at the pedestals and the Cambodians come in family groups to pray at the likeness of the Enlightened One and to burn incense-sticks as they implore (it should not be any other benediction but that of) Knowledge.

But in Cambodia as elsewhere, prayer is most often a formula conceived to have a coercitive or persuasive efficacy beyond another form of words. And prayer is still more efficacious if recited with appropriate ritual.

During the fateful six years from 1933 to 1939 I took, one November evening, my place in the upper berth of a sleeping compartment bound for Berlin. As the train slowed down jolting over the points into Saarbrücken station, I leaned out of my bunk and glanced through the window at a grey Rhenish morning. Then I saw that my companion of the lower berth was perched on the little flap-seat opposite to me and binding on his phylacteries, slowly and vaguely, while he gazed, muttering, through the dull glass.

He had thrown, by precaution, his passport upon his bed. The door flung open, the Nazi immigration officer stepped briskly in. I handed my passport and motioned to the other on the lower berth. The fellow hesitated a moment. I said 'Well, can't you see this man is occupied?'—he stamped the document and replaced it. . . .

The Jew mumbled on. Then, removing his phylacteries—his preservatives—he thanked me for what I had done. I suggested that perhaps while travelling he might dispense with the protective harness and say his prayers less ostentatiously.

'Oh, then' smiled he 'they would not be ritual and right.'

'Not so efficacious, you mean?'

'Well, if you like to put it that way.'

Then he told me that he was a furrier by trade and inhabited Leipzig.

"You will always be assured of a welcome in my shop and if you

want to buy some furs, well, you won't do better than at my place . . . by the way, I am on my way back from London now where I have relations, here is my card.

His name was Montag and his London address was somewhere in Great Saint Thomas Apostle.

"I must tell you, however, that when I am in your country I always use the English form of my name—Montagu."

So now we know. . . .

Small children roll about naked on the shiny floors. Their elders chatter discreetly.

Khmer sculpture was singularly chaste. You find nowhere in Indo-China counterparts to the turgent *maithuna* couplings of Indian carving. Nothing comparable to the moving scene at Kajuraho where attendants avert their gaze from love, and in so doing, add, in our convention, obscenity to the scene. The ancient Khmers fashioned no such images after the models of their Indian masters. You find no *monstre à double tête formé d'amants unis qui tendrement s'ignorent*. The Divine Dancers of Cambodian art are more divine than dancing. Their half-naked bodies are calm and cool.

Still, in India the more ancient erotic iconography remains grave and rarely bursts into the grotesque embraces portrayed with startling realism in the statuary of Tibet.

When Maillol was showing Paul Valéry the illustrations for Verlaine's *Chansons pour Elle*, astonished, and indeed shocked, by the calm and classical audacity of the engravings, he exclaimed '*Comment, Monsieur Maillol, vous dessinez ces choses-là? Vous, que je croyais un homme grave*' . . . to call from the sculptor the lapidary phrase

'*Mais, l'amour est une chose grave*'

The great grey stone *lingam* or phallus is sculptured with magic decoration. A number of these sacred phalli stands in the gloom of the Phnompenh collection. On one face of the column will be carved a celestial dancer, her pointed tiara jutting upwards framed in the triangle formed by the frenulum of the gland.

In the days of Khmer Brahmanism these holy, erotic and magic emblems were kept in gold-embroidered sheaths displaying the Four Faces of Shiva. The preservatives were removed when the lustral fluids—oils and perfumes—were lavished upon the *lingam* and as the sacred sperm of the deity ran down upon the God's organ.

The broad bays open on to green gardens tangled with banyans, bananas and bamboos, . . . glossy, dark leaves and shivering stems,

shimmer away into a dreamy background as they are wreathed in the curling spirals of incense-smoke.

les parfums sont les plus grands traîtres du monde, ils annoncent, ébauchent et dénoncent les desseins les plus délicieux.

The Cambodians are oblivious of onlookers. The challenge of the European is not taken up by sullen stare as in India, by a smile as in Burma, by an averting of the gaze as in Annam or by a glance of complicity as in China . . . the Cambodian is at his ease.

If you whisper to the children, if you give them lollipops, their mothers will smile in faintly approving fashion. They may be more apprehensive if you touch their offspring, for they will fear that you should finger the infants' heads. And such contacts are not only dreadfully bad-mannered but also baleful. The 'life-essence' or 'soul-stuff,' of the individual is seated in his head and may be injured by handling. The head is sacred.[1]

The Rape of the Lock

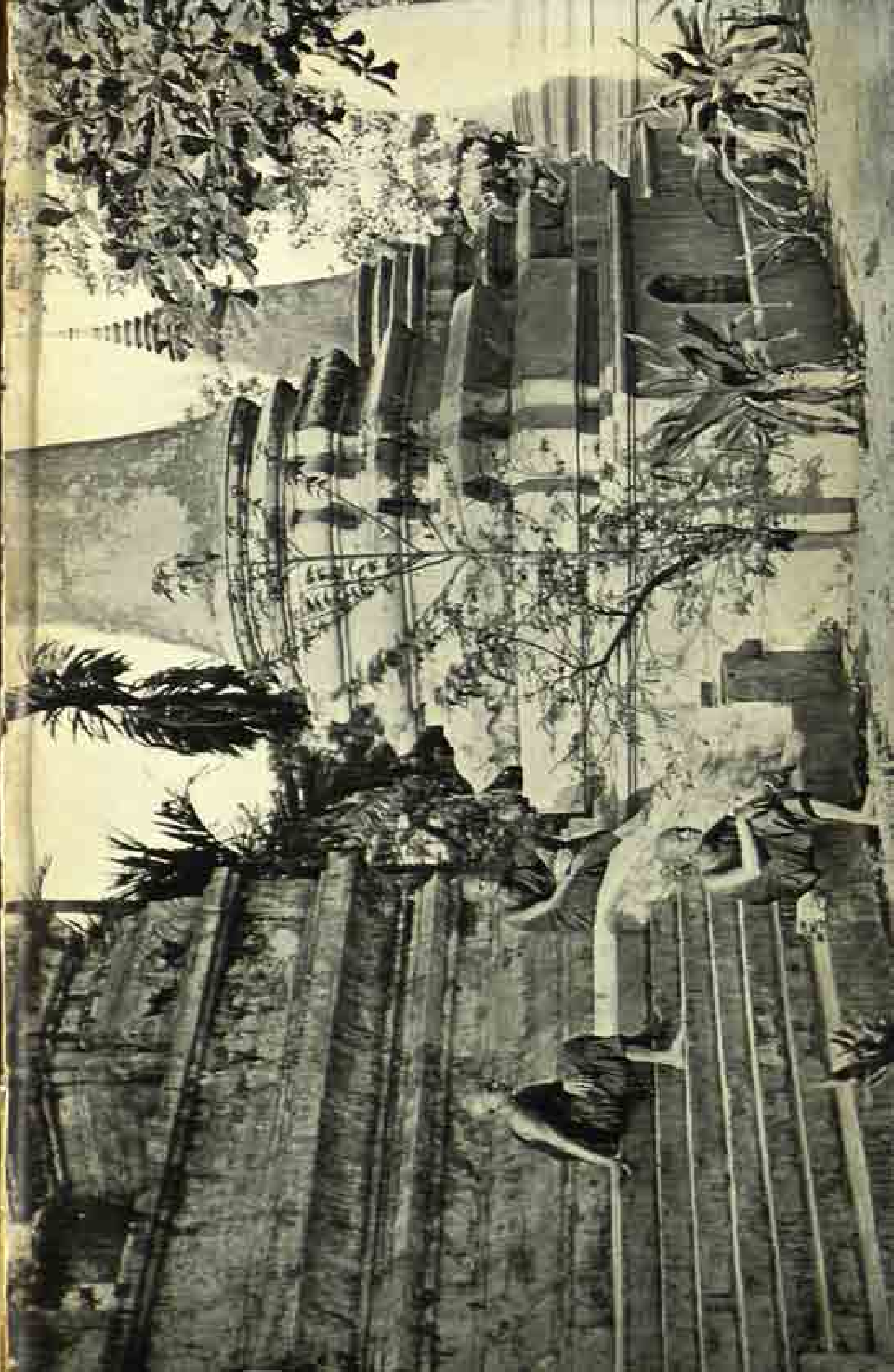
The Romans knew well that some days are auspicious and some days are inauspicious—for us as individuals. And you may know the nature of the days by trial and error. When things go wrong from the first it is better to return home and meditate. Days are unlucky as prayer is efficacious. There are times when we are clumsier than usual and become excited by our clumsiness to still further fumbling. Prayer makes us stronger and perhaps, even wiser than we are. Why seek a reality beyond the subjective?

Until they are aged about seven to ten years, the Cambodian children have their heads shaven except for a tuft (*chuk*) at the top of the crown, which tuft is tressed and, at times, plaited with a fillet of white flowers.[2] At some time which suits the family's convenience and, in any case, before the onset of obvious puberty, the tuft is shorn with great ceremony. The rite is a Cambodian First Communion or circumcision in the sense that it is what the French call a *rite de passage*, a ceremony marking the transition from one physical

[1] The 'soul-stuff' theory is fundamental to the religious of India, but it may well represent a very wide-spread and very ancient concept of all south-eastern Asia—and beyond.

[2] Shiva, in the Cambodian version of his legend (for the old Hinduist mythology still penetrates and informs the ritual and social life of the Cambodians despite their pious orthodoxy in the Little Vehicle creed) shaved, in his Paradise and on the summit of Mount Kailasa the tuft of his son Prea-Eyso when the boy was aged eleven. The Mount is represented in the Cambodian ceremony by an artificial 'mound.' The substitutive sacrifice of hair is a not uncommon one in many different cultures.

Phnompenh: The Botum Votdei Temple (*p.* 32)







(or spiritual or social) state to another—a milestone along the road we tread.

The tuft must be cut upon an auspicious day fixed by the *horas* or astrologers, and the rite is essentially the same whether executed around the child of peasants or the children of the Royal House.

In February, 1938, Her Royal Highness Princess Monikessan, daughter of the King of Cambodia, had her lock raped.

Escorted by the high dignitaries of the Court she was carried round the streets of Phnompenh in a golden palanquin. The little princess, immobile and hieratic, looked like nothing so much as one of the sacred statues of India or Spain borne a little jerkily and haltingly in procession. She was girt with a *sampot charabap* or waist-scarf of gold brocade over a skirt of deep orange, colour of the planet Mercury which ruled that auspicious day. Her jacket was of tightly-fitting gold-leaves. Her arms and ankles were encircled with heavy golden bracelets and her fingers covered with precious rings. Her tuft was hidden under a high pointed golden mkot or royal crown, while her face and arms were heavily powdered with saffron so that they showed pale-gold, the colour of the Gods.[1]

And dancing and tumbling around her car and among the courtiers and ladies, was a horde of actors and clowns, disguised as Japanese, Malays, Burmese, Chinese, Europeans even, and some of them wearing hallucinating masks. And the princess sat like a sacred doll while the buffoons, mimes, mummers bandied witticisms with the crowd and terrified the children. Comic relief. Contrast. Do not tire the people with the vision of Majesty but let them be drawn back to it immobile, superhuman and imposing above the surge and jostle of us poor slaves. For the crowd kneels as the princess passes. There is virtue in her presence as offspring of the sacred sovereign and as a creature in transition from the neutrality of infancy to the strange and mysterious second phase of a woman's existence.[2]

[1] As generally happens when a new religion is adopted or imposed, a people retains in its social ceremonies much of the old rituals. As Little Vehicle Buddhism is not a cult with many imposing ceremonies, the Cambodians have retained (or have reborrowed from the Siamese) an interesting mass of pre-Buddhist (or pre-Little Vehicle Buddhist) customs.

[2] The sovereigns and royal princes of Cambodia rarely marry since unions with members of the Siamese royal house have ceased and consanguineous marriages are uncommon. Marriage ceremonies are only performed when regular marriages are performed. The male members of the royal family take concubines—whose offspring, is of course, entirely legitimate—and the princesses remain unmarried. There is no hereditary nobility in Cambodia. The descendants of kings are regarded as 'noble' to the fifth generation and thereafterwards as 'plebeian.' Many of the most prominent men of the realm are of peasant origin.

(*Above*): *The Water Festival at Phnompenh* (*p.* 34)

(*Below*): *Ferry on the Road to Kompong Thom* (*p.* 72)

The crowd is orderly in its disorder. The music plays several conflicting airs, the orchestras cancel each other out. There is the bustling human activity which keeps the devils away and the evil spirits in subjection.

The ceremony of tonsure itself begins for ordinary mortals about seven in the evening when the child prostrates himself before the bonzes reading prayers.

The first evening's rites end when the monks have finished chanting the prayers. On the morrow at a favourable hour the child, robed in white, prostrates himself before the monks.

Then the *baku* takes over and the ceremony is no longer even superficially Buddhist.[1] The *baku* unplaits the tuft of hair and shakes it into three separate tresses each one of which he slips into a ring woven of the grass called a *smau-anchean*.

First, the parents and then all the guests in turn, cut a few of the hairs. The child's head is then shaved clean and he walks up on to the mound where he is asperged with holy water. When he comes down from the mound his feet are washed.

This 'Knoll' is the most picturesque and curious piece of property of the ceremony. The mound is a wooden platform rising some 18 or 21 feet above the ground and covered with a trellis-work of bamboo which itself is overlaid with white cotton-stuff rather cleverly painted with long streaks of blue and brown to present the appearance of a great grey rock. In the crinkles and folds of the stuff are stuck branches of trees, tufts of grass and flowers while a host of cardboard animals is artfully scattered over the surface. Not only are the beasts of Cambodia represented but sometimes also giraffes and camels.

At the summit of the *phnom* or knoll (high places play almost as important a part in the rituals of Cambodia old and new as they did in those of the Near East) is set a platform some five or six yards square. It looks rather like an altar from which stick up four gilt columns garnished with red silk curtains (each one is caught up in the middle and drawn into its column by a cord) and a red silk canopy. Around the shrine are shrubs and flowers in porcelain pots, while, in the Palace ceremonies, seven-tiered gilt umbrellas are

[1] The *baku* are the last representatives of Hinduism in Cambodia and their business is to deal with things which are not recognized by the Established Church. The *baku* keep the *prea-khan* or Sacred Sword of the Realm. Formerly, they sat on the Privy Council and so, on a king's death, they had a say in the choice of a successor.

placed one at each corner of the platform and around the mound itself.[1]

Towards the east and near to the shrine is a large copper basin filled with Mekong water but just as efficacious as the water from the sacred spring on Mount Kailasa. At the mound's base and in small niches are placed altars with floral and food offerings to the *boddhisatvas*.[2]

A protecting cord of seven strands of untwined virgin cotton surrounds the mound and denies access to the evil spirits who always seek to trouble festivals.

The ceremonies endured by little Princess Monikessan were, of course, more complicated and magnificent. The Sacred Mount was set up in the Throne Room of the Palace and the child walked up the knoll in company of His Majesty himself and the principal dignitaries of the realm. The King crowned his daughter with the Bonnet of Happiness while a salute of twelve guns was fired. After she had retired to change her clothes she stood up before the shrine in vestments of golden colour and received unction at the sovereign's hands.

> '*Chastes citoyens de Zanzibar*
> *Qui ne faites plus d'enfants*
> *Sachez que la fortune et la gloire*
> *Les forêts d'ananas les troupeaux d'éléphants*
> *Appartiennent de droit*
> *Dans un proche avenir*
> *A ceux qui pour les prendre auront fait des enfants*.'
>
> GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE. *Les Mamelles de Tirésias.*

There are only two and a half million Cambodians in a country a good deal larger than England[3] and the total population does not

[1] These 'umbrellas,' emblems of sovereignty, are high poles bearing at intervals from top to bottom flounces of golden silk, in form like lamp-shades, and increasing in size from the small one at the summit to the large one at the base.

[2] A *boddhisatva* is a being on the way to attain supreme knowledge and therefore become a *buddha*. Boddhisatvas belong to Great Vehicle or Mahayana Buddhism that prevailed in Cambodia in ancient Khmer times. Their presence or their invocation probably shows that the rites of the tuft-cutting are in their present form before the introduction of Little Vehicle Buddhism into Cambodia.

[3] The official figures at the last census (and they may not be very reliable) gave Cambodians 'and assimilated' 2,600,000. Annamese 250,000. Chinese 105,000. Malay and Cham Moslems 73,000. French (of all sorts from France, from French India and from other parts of Indo-China) 1,800. There are probably less than 500 'white' men in the country.

exceed three million. In fact, Cambodia is what our dreadful experts and statisticians call 'under-populated.' Under-populated for what?

The rich central plain of the country could doubtless support twenty million men but, thank God, it does not.[1] It has become the fashion with us to deplore (at least officially and in public) stationary or declining populations, but we are never told what limit is to be set to proliferation.

The fact is, that we have not yet, in temperate zones found how to provide all the members of a large population with enough to eat. So much of men's efforts must be directed to the production of light, heat and clothing and shelter against the weather.

But you hear hardly anywhere in Cambodia the cries, the threats, the shouts and the menaces with which women distort their children and their charges in our European lands. Perhaps Cambodian parents rather elicit than impose obedience. Or perhaps they do not worry about obedience at all. . . .

The languid heat makes for good manners.

The small population lets men be fairly happy still. How many of our woes are not due to our dreadful over-population made still less tolerable by the shrieks of the fools who, delighted as fools always are at finding something to nag about, are never tired of telling us that more and yet more human beings should be cast upon the earth?[2]

Luckily there is little prospect that the birth-rate will rise in north-western Europe and if our birth-rate maniacs imagine that we are slipping behind in the race—for what?—they may console themselves with the thought that the Russian population is vastly increasing and will probably go on increasing for a generation or two. That the Indian population increases at the rate of five

[1] The Cambodian has little of the Chinese or Annamese philoprogenitiveness and almost no ancestor-worship. The Cambodian does not embitter his life with children as does the Annamese, the former just accepts his offspring as they come and sees them die off with considerable equanimity.

[2] It is not the fault of the French if the Cambodian population does not increase. Here are some figures. At Pasteur's request the institute bearing his name was in 1890 founded at Saigon. And from this institute anti-snakebite serum and many other life-saving products have been prepared for Cambodia. In 1936 600,000 Cambodians and inhabitants of Cambodia were vaccinated. In 1936-7 there was a cholera epidemic in Siam but no cases were reported in Cambodia. And so on. The Cambodians have not for the Far East a very high infantile mortality rate. They just don't have very many children. Fairly primitive but rather effective birth-control methods may have something to do with this state of things so striking after the immoderate proliferation of the Annamese and Chinese.

million a year. That every twelve months there are some ten million more Chinese in the world.

If our population-pushers are thinking about the next war they may also reflect that, with the new weapons, we may be, if not annihilated, at least decimated, anyway. . . .

Some time ago I had a long conversation with a public-spirited Portuguese lady whose activities are mostly devoted towards an endeavour to save the lives of as many Portuguese babies as possible. Now, despite a very high infantile mortality rate, the population of Portugal is increasing rather rapidly and stands to-day at about ten millions for a small country with few natural resources.

So, if this lady's efforts are successful, there will be more and more Portuguese and less and less to eat. Wholesale emigration might be a solution to the problem, but such emigration is costly. Most of the Portuguese colonies are not fit for large-scale European colonisation and if the Portuguese go to Brazil they cease to be Portuguese. So what?

But our lolling Cambodians in the shade of the red temple-museum care for none of these things, neither do they resent the slim, smart, slinky, sophisticated Chinese girls, cool and elegant, looking politer than they are. They wander about, giggle faintly at the turgent obscenity of the great phalli. An elegant ivorine gesture . . . and then they trip out to their cars for the ten miles drive every self-respecting and prosperous Chinese undertakes after four o'clock in the afternoon, just to show creditors, debtors and prospective customers —for the Chinese world of men is so divided—that the old firm is still there and doing business, quietly, efficiently, ruthlessly and with due observance of all forms of local courtesy, convention and custom.

'*Wundertätige Bilder sind meist nur schlechte Gemälde.*''

GOETHE.

Murillo, they say, would communicate before he began to paint. The limner-monks of Tibet must perform manual acts and enjoy ritual before they set to work upon their hieratic tangkas or holy pictures. And probably the more one holds that rites have an objective virtue, the more their real subjective efficacy is increased.

An Indian fashioner of images is hardly what we would call a creative artist, that is, a man with an exceptional gift for experience and a natural and acquired skill in presenting and recreating experience. The Indian image-maker is rather a skilled craftsman

whose task is to reflect the spiritual fashion of his age within the canons of a highly stylized, conventionalized and formal art. That is to say, he is an interpreter.

In modern Indian tradition an image is conceived as helping in the identification of the worshipper with his deity. Art to produce a state. The great concern of the Indians is out of men to make gods.

Æsthetic experience is held to depend mainly upon the innate or acquired sensitiveness of the spectator. And images and dances and ritual are a means to edification, 'pieces of apparatus' as the pompous Indian phrase has it, for facilitating the identification of worshipper and god. For the deity can only be worshipped in spirit and in truth when the worshipper has become his only deity.

If we are seeking a definition of the whole end of man—why here is one. Become a God.

And the Buddhist ideal is not essentially different from that of conventional Hinduism, despite all the apparent antinomy between the two religions.

The Arts of India

Art is, in its origin and essence, religious.

If we exclude the objects from the Indus Valley cities and a few traces of what has been called 'pre-Mauryan art,' the art of India may be said to have begun with the adoption of Buddhism as a State religion by great Asoka.

In the fine carvings from Bharhut in the Calcutta Museum we already have the dance of the heavenly dancers, those *apsaras* who adorn the walls of Angkor.[1]

The art of Bharhut is fresh and its inspiration almost primitive. Concern is with things and not with ideas, but art is very closely linked with religion. The Buddha's presence is indicated, not by an anthropomorphic image, but, as is the Christ's appearance in the earlier Christian iconography, by a symbol. Sometimes it is a tree—the Tree of Life. Sometimes it is the Earth-Lotus, or the Svastika, or again, the *dhammaçakka*, that is the World-Wheel or Circle of the Law.

New interpretations are being given to age-old patterns. The iconography and with it the vocabulary of the new religion is being set and fixed and crystallized.

The Bharhut sculptures are a little earlier than those of Sanchi

[1] Bharhut is second century B.C. The 'classical' period of the Hindu dance is from fourth to ninth century. Later, India loses the poses and poises preserved, though transmuted, in Cambodia, Siam, and elsewhere in south-eastern Asia.

and Amaravati.[1] This Sanchi art owes much to Persian Achaemenid influence, but it also drew inspiration from a Near East already in part Hellenized. But for all their freshness and charm, the sculptures of Bharhut, of Sanchi, and of Amaravati show a faulty technique—the workman and the craftsman had not yet quite mastered their material. But the art of Bharhut already shows the prototypes of the sculpture at Angkor.

It is in the carvings and sculptures from Gandhara that the figure of the Buddha is shown for the first time. He stands or sits upon an Earth-Lotus, now and for ever afterwards to be his throne.[2] These statues of the Blessed One are quite un-Indian, for they are copies and, indeed, still clumsy copies of the Hellenistic models scattered by Alexander's conquests upon his highway of victory.

The later history of the Buddha's presentments is one of a progressive Indianization of his image. But, to this day, even the most unskilled and, indeed, grotesque statues that you may see in the Laos or the jewel-bedizened images of Siam and Cambodia, shine clearly with something of their Greek origin. The 'wet drapery' folds have harshened and stiffened. The hyachinthin curls of Apollo have massed into pepper-corns. The Athenian fillet has drawn tighter and tighter until it has squeezed the enclosed locks into a ball. The forehead sprouts an *urna*—jewel, hairy mole or caste-mark. The top-knot flares up into an *ushnisha* or Flame of Glory, but the nose remains, even in the lands of Mongoloid or Indonesian men, most sharp and straight and Greek.

The Gandhara things are, on the whole, more curious than satisfying. The French have found in recent years, and during their excavations in Afghanistan at Hadda and elsewhere, much more beautiful things and Buddha images less Hellenistic and almost Greek in spirit.

After this Græco-Buddhist period in the first century B.C. no dominating foreign influences are felt until the Moslem invasions of the ninth century. What was carried overseas to Farther India and the Islands was, therefore, essentially Indian in spirit and in execution. The Indian message of religion and religion's art was delivered with immense majesty to the uttermost East.

The 'Gupta' era was that of the classical phase of Indian art

[1] There is a precious series of reliefs from Amaravati now in the British Museum and a cast of one gateway of the Sanchi Tope is displayed in South Kensington. The *torana* or gateway of Sanchi looks like a copy in stone of a wooden original.

[2] Later on, the Buddha is represented in the Royal Attitude of the Sasanian Persian sovereigns or of the Kushan kings.

and a time when technique was well-nigh faultless in achieving a rare perfection of form. The artists attempted nothing beyond their powers and in the wonderful fourth century created the glories of India. A classical restraint went hand in hand with an admirable adaptation of means to an end.

This was the time of the admirable frescoes adorning the rock-cut shrines and whose echoes went rippling all over eastern Asia and to the islands.

It is this Gupta 'national style'[1] which was the inspiration of the sculpture and architecture of south-eastern Indo-China.

The decline into a florid and elegant revolt from Gupta classicism and restraint came rapidly enough. But the art of seventh century India, if not in the great tradition and if not offering any surpassing masterpieces, does go with a swing and then it is rather pleasingly romantic and its conscious archaism is touching.

Some of the 'pre-Angkor' sculpture in the Phnompenh Museum may be Funanese. The Buddhist images in sandstone found at Romlok (in the province of Ta Keo and thus in the region of the Funan capital) in 1923 are almost certainly Funanese. One of the statues is an upright, and slightly slewed (or what the French call *hanché*) Buddha, clad in 'wet-fold' clinging draperies much recalling the sculptures of the Gupta period in India. A head from Romlok is long, with an oval face showing a firm and finished technique reminding one of that of the Amaravati carvings. This piece would be at the latest, of the fourth or fifth century.

To approximately the same epoch must be referred a bronze unearthed in 1911 at Dong-Duong (in Annam) and now in the Hanoi Museum. The statue is that of an upright Buddha making the Gesture of Argument with his right hand and with his left raising the hem of his monastic robe. But it is likely that the bronze was an imported piece, cast in Ceylon. The inspiration of the figure is, however, distinctly that of Graeco-Buddhist northern Indian models and it may well have served native artists as a prototype. The Chinese chroniclers relate that the men of Funan were cunning bronze-founders (though little or nothing of bronze attributable to them has, as yet, been found) and engravers as well as excellent carpenters, cabinet-makers and wood-carvers.

[1] Indian art and architecture during their heyday are rather sharply divided into a northern and a southern style. Although Khmer architecture was influenced by the southern style, the northern tradition was more powerful in Cambodia than is often realized.

'They fell trees to build their dwellings. . . they adorn their houses with wood-work . . .'

We may suppose then, that most of the monuments of Funan were erected in perishable materials and that their houses, palaces, and perhaps even temples, may have been not unlike the Indonesian dwellings of the south-eastern islands . . . or, indeed, the architecture of modern Cambodia and Siam.

Though Khmer art and architecture were, to a great extent, the daughters of India, Chinese, Cham and Javanese influences told on the old Cambodians. And, running underneath all, we must never forget, is an ancient 'Indo-Chinese' (or if we will 'Indonesian') tradition infusing everything the Khmers made with a peculiar un-Indian character.

The extraordinary fascination you feel radiating from much of what the Khmers fashioned may be explained, in part at least by this transmutation, this transformation of things Indian into things essentially Khmer. And you are set wondering at the spiritual interpretations and at the intangible, imponderable realities the Khmers made for themselves and how those realities reacted upon the re-makers.

Khmer statuary, as we may see it displayed in pomp and cool order at Phnompenh, falls into two main and distinct classes.

At the beginning of the seventh century the sculptures are still fully imbued with Indian ideals. The statues of this period are often of fine proportions and delicately finished. Some of the images reproduce, in an attenuated form, the slewed (*hanché*) pose known (for Indian idols) as that of the Three Flexions.

It is a gracious and supple pose which, however, little by little, gives way to a rigorous, rigid and upright posture as taut and archaic as that of sixth century Greece.

Of such is the superb Harihara (Shiva and Vishnu in one) from Prasat Andet. A group of three Brahmanistic divinities (from Phnom Bayang) of great size and particularly vigorous design and execution is also at Phnompenh. In 1927 another superb Harihara of high stature was discovered within the recesses of the Sambor Forest. And, nearer at hand, in Paris (*Musée Guimet*) is also a Harihara, which, though mutilated, is most graceful and hieratically imposing.

The high-water mark of this archaic Khmer art was reached when the hieratic character was united with a sensitiveness of modelling and an acuity of observation which are admirable.

At the beginning of the tenth century, the spirit changes,

doubtless under some complex of influences both artistic and religious and perhaps also political and social. There appears a cold grandeur, a little arid and inhuman as we may see in the sculpture from Koh Ker (then the capital) and from Phnom Bok.

The statues of the Angkor Period (from tenth to the thirteenth centuries) are not always very skilfully executed. Many of them are, doubtless, inferior to those of former times. But towards the end of the Angkor period (and, therefore, just as the twilight of the Khmers was darkening into night) the art of the statuary revived by contact with the vivifying breath of the subtle Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna) doctrines. But it was a fleeting flash whose light can often be caught in the Buddhist images with half-closed eyes, with vague, impenetrable smile and an ineffably gentle, disabused and melancholy expression.

The ancient Khmers worked no marble. Their images and sculptures are fashioned out of a fragile, friable sandstone, grey-blue, ash-grey or rose, with which time still deals gently since the haunting visages fade and become more ethereal, keeping their life even when their features blur and loosen.

And now we do not need to go to Indo-China to get at least a general idea of Khmer sculpture. Nothing will take the place of the Phnompenh collections. Nothing can even give us an idea of Khmer architecture if we do not make a pilgrimage to the jungle sanctuaries. But, just over the way, in France, in Paris, is the finest and most precious assemblage of Indo-Chinese sculpture which can be seen out of the Far East. And, doubtless, the treasures of the *Musée Guimet* will never be equalled outside Cambodia. A long day spent in the admirably-arranged galleries of the 'Guimet' will enthral and inspire and allure. Everyone who goes to Paris should make a point of living a few hours in this revelation.

'*Il* (i.e. Condillac) *y établit que nous ne pensons qu'avec le secours des mots: que les langues sont de véritables méthodes analytiques . . . enfin que l'art de raisonner se réduit à une langue bien faite.*'

Lavoisier, *Discours Préliminaire* (1789).

Oriental libraries can be dangerous places if we may judge by the sad end of John Leyden who 'entering a library said to contain many Eastern MSS. without having the place air'd, he was seiz'd with Batavian fever and dyed after three days' illness on the 28th August, 1811.'[1]

[1] Leyden, the orientalist, 1775-1811.

But, like so many of the buildings in this happy land, the Royal Library at Phnompenh has no windows in our sense of the word—there are just broad bays or vast holes in the wall through which you will see framed a scene of verdure throwing pool-like reflections upon the Library ceiling. In the garden, and backed by a blossoming hibiscus-bush, a man is sitting and reading. His carved wooden armchair is supported by winged garudas, bird-faced monsters bearing in their beaks a magic jewel. The back and arms are one, formed by a serpent with no tail but two heads, one rising poised on either side of the seat. And the chair is painted peacock-blue and green and yellow.

An auspicious chair for use when you are reading the scriptures. Upon it is a grey-brown, shaven bonze, his saffron robe caught over his left shoulder. He is perusing a copy of the *tripitaka* scratched on talipot leaves. His feet just touch the ground, he is not lolling or lounging, he is not cross-legged, leaning or cross-kneed, for monks may not so comport themselves when reading the Scriptures. His head is bent, as the disciples are bidden to look down.

The Little Vehicle Gospel, the *tripitaka* or Triple Basket, comprises the *sutta* or doctrine, the *vinaya* or discipline and the *abhidhamma* or metaphysic. The three make up the warp of the *dhamma* or Faith into which each believer will weave the woof of his own works.

The Scriptures are always mysterious. Did we know the circumstances in which they were written, by whom they were written, and, above all, by whom they were re-written, we should be edified and alarmed. Words when written take upon them a new power. In dying they are immortalized. And first come the words and then the philosophy to explain the words, a philosophy so forged as to insure that by sanctifying the words it and the discipline and the way of life commanded by it shall not be challenged.

In one corner of the Hall are two or three men copying the Scriptures for dispatch to provincial monasteries.

What do we not owe to those cunning Sumerian priest-merchants who invented writing through book-keeping? For writing seems to have originated in Sumeria at the end of the so-called 'Uruk' period, that is, about 3000 B.C.

It is not unreasonable (in the present state of our knowledge) to assume that during the formative centuries when writing was rather an idea than a concrete achievement the idea spread to Egypt, and also, shortly afterwards, to India. But it must have been a

concept only which was carried, for neither the Indus script to the East nor the Egyptian script to the West bear any traces of resemblance to the Sumerian writing of Mesopotamia.[1]

During the so-called "Harappa" period of the Indus civilizations writing was used, although it has not turned up at any of the other three Indus Valley cultures. The script is pictorial and comparatively rich in symbols. Detached accents are a unique feature. It is undeciphered and the specious correlations proposed by Hevesy with the nineteenth century script on the incised wooden tablets from Easter Island are untenable. In fact the nature of the Harappa script is undetermined and seems limited to seals, so it may have been a purely commercial device for marking goods.[2] Heine-Geldern has worked on comparisons with the early phases of Chinese writing in Shang times. But these are, however, 1,000 years later in date than the Indus Valley material. We do not know how, or even when, the Indus Valley writing died out, but it did not in any way affect the systems of writing imported and employed in classical India. There is, indeed, nowhere, as far as we can see, an evolutionary series between mnemonic and pictorial writing on the one hand and ideographic and alphabetic on the other.

The Scriptures are mysterious.

They do not offer us the words men speak, or even the words men ever spoke. And what if the words you read are in Pali which you hardly understand? And again, the Scriptures bear any interpretation *qualified* interpreters may proffer.

It's all in the book.

It's just like the man said.

Nearby, are two painters illustrating primers for children so that they may learn their letters twined into the most exciting and alluring shapes of animals, divinities, spirits and heroes. Cambodian writing is rather complicated and archaic. The alphabet (of which the Siamese is a simplified version) is derived from southern Indian whereas the Burmese letters are those of the rock-cut Pali of northern India—much modified for writing with a stylus upon talipot leaves.

In a corner of the library-hall, lined and furrowed with

[1] As far as we can see the first purely alphabetic writing was that elaborated (or at least used) at Ras Shamra or Ugarit on the northern Syrian coast in the second millennium B.C. The characters used were borrowed from the cuneiform writing of Sumeria.

[2] Sumerian writing and, therefore, the most ancient we have news of, arose from trade-marks, marks apposite to distinguish the temple's part of offerings. Literature and philosophy and organized religion have their basis in book-keeping as have the sciences but not the arts which have theirs in hunting-magic.

stacks of bookshelves bearing either the long, narrow palm-leaf volumes or European books bound in all shades of the ritual yellow from palest jonquil to deep gamboge . . . in a corner, is a group of monks upon mats. The men's eyes are directed to a luminous world-sphere. The religious listen attentively, absorbedly and without any comprehension to the ceremonial chant of *Radio-Paris*.

This Royal Library—for we are in the Royal Library—and Buddhist Institute served French policy in Cambodia.

The Cambodians' 'protectors' know well enough that many, if not most, of the troubles confronting our masters have taken shape and form since the fading-away of what Mr. Arthur Waley has so happily called the "police-court of Heaven."

Even after a not wholly reparable disaster of defeat and humiliation, those European Powers which are still trying to maintain a semblance of their former hegemony are realizing how dangerous it is to overthrow native monarchies and to endeavour to govern direct and how still more dangerous it is to weaken the Established Church.

The French in Cambodia exalted King and protected Church.

We, in Burma, abolished the monarchy and snubbed the monks.

To-day, the Burmese politicians have obtained complete independence from us, whereas, the French, after calamity in war, are back again in Cambodia on much the same footing as they were in 1939.

Maybe it's all just a coincidence.

In Cambodia not only were perambulating libraries sent far and wide with Scriptures, educational primers, records and radio, lecturers and films, but from the remotest jungle villages, monks could come and visit Phnompenh (at the government's expense) and follow in the capital, if they would, courses in the history and tenets of their faith.

These men in the corner have come for edification to Phnompenh.

And *Radio-Paris* was giving it to them. Don't people who know no word of German listen to opera sung in German?

In fact, the monks were made to feel that the Faith, and themselves in the Faith, were fostered by the Protecting Power. So, not only was the necessary police-court of Heaven strengthened, not only were the Cambodian ecclesiastics weaned away from their old habit of seeking enlightenment in Siam (in Siam, an independent State, the monks might get inquisitive and critical—keep them at home—home-keeping youths had ever. . . .) but the feeling of

Cambodian nationality (that is the imagining that there could be such a thing as Cambodian 'nationality') was created. And, as this 'national idea' found its embodiment (for every idea must have one) in the person of His Majesty King Sisowath Monivong—everyone was happy.

Religion may be opium for the people, but ask the opium-smoker what he thinks.

'Credibile est quia ineptum, certum est quia impossibile. Non potest non fuisse quod scriptum est.'

THE YEAR OF THE TIGER THE TENTH DECADE KHAI SAMRETHISAK

THE TWELFTH OF THE REIGN OF THE BUDDHIST ERA

THE TWO THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIRST.

The ceremony in honour of the Slip of the Sacred Tree Preas Bothipruk offered by the Venerable Narada of Ceylon to his Majesty PREAS BAT SAMDACH PREAS SISOWATHMONIVONG King of Cambodia.

In March 1939, the Venerable Narada was invited by the Governments of Cambodia and Luang-Prabang to visit Indo-China bringing with him from his native Ceylon two slips of the sacred *Bodhi* Tree of Knowledge at Anuradhapura, itself reputed born of the Great Tree at Buddha-Gaya under which the Blessed One received Enlightenment.

The Abbot was received with high honours. The Cambodian Court published a supplement to the Gazette with a programme of the ceremonies held in honour of the Sacred Tree whose slip was offered to His Majesty Preas Bat Samdach Preas Sisowathmonivong.

The Sacred Tree, planted in a pot, was placed on the Great Royal Palanquin of Gold in the main hall of the Buddhist Institute at Phnompenh. The palanquin was adorned as an altar while around were displayed the offerings of flowers, fruits, wax candles and 'incense trees' or clusters of joss-sticks.

After prayers had been recited over the slip, it was carried in procession and in great pomp around the town of Phnompenh and

back to the gardens of the Buddhist Institute where it was planted with prayers while the crowd made offerings.

From half-past seven at night until midnight followed a succession of sermons by the Venerable Narada and other dignitaries of the Church on the history of the Sacred Tree and the manifold blessings of the Faith.

The King of Cambodia did not himself take part in these ceremonies. Perhaps he was tired. Perhaps he thought they owed a little too much to the initiative of the French. But at Luang-Prabang the Sacred Slip was borne upon a royal elephant about the city while King and Abbot walked behind accompanied by the French Resident.

The Abbot was everywhere welcomed with the highest honours. Kings received him. He preached in Pali (which but a few of his more learned hearers understood); he begged in the streets like other monks—since, whether abbot or simple monk, the men of the yellow robe must own nothing, and he received offerings of cut-wax tapers like rows of amber lupins.

I do not know whether the Venerable Narada (like you and me a British subject) was invited to carry a third Slip to Burma but had he done so, there would have been there no Buddhist king to welcome him and to adore the Tree, and I do not think that His Excellency the Governor would have taken any part in the ceremonies.

'*Je retourne à l'histoire. Comme insensiblement elle se change en rêve à mesure qu'elle s'éloigne du présent. Tout près de nous ce ne sont encore que des mythes tempérés, gênés par des textes non incroyables, par des vestiges matériels qui modèrent un peu notre fantaisie.*'

PAUL VALÉRY *Sur les Mythes et la Mythologie.*

The Sacred Tree complex must be one of the oldest for which we have evidence on Indian soil. Buddhism, for all its apparent break with the past, soon was enveloped with the roots and branches of purely Indian tradition.

The Tree of Enlightenment. The tree is transformed. It takes its place in the new vocabulary of the new religion. For a religion must have its own vocabulary.

Perhaps not a little of the misconstruing of men's activities comes from our lazy, and perhaps almost natural, tendency to interpret phenomena by their own vocabulary. We are so apt to think that a 'movement,' whether religious in the old classical traditional sense of the word or a political racket such as National-

Socialism in Germany, are phenomena capable of a logical interpretation, that is to say, of being judged by their own professions. Nothing is less likely to be true.

Religions, movements, organizations and the like, are conditioned by circumstances. If the favouring circumstances, if the luck, are not there we hear little or nothing of them. A man pushes through because he seems to offer, what at times, we all seek, command, a lead, order, security, certainty, a change or what not. When he has seized the power over men's bodies then he must subjugate their minds, or if he has by, his personality seized their minds, then he must control their bodies. What he has founded will die with him if he, or his immediate followers and disciples, do not erect a philosophy and a theology. First comes the fact and then its justification and its justification must repose upon an assumption, therefore the assumption must be masked by a new vocabulary. No philosophy yet has been fabricated which does not offer us either old words with new meanings or new words for old, vague feelings not susceptible of definition.

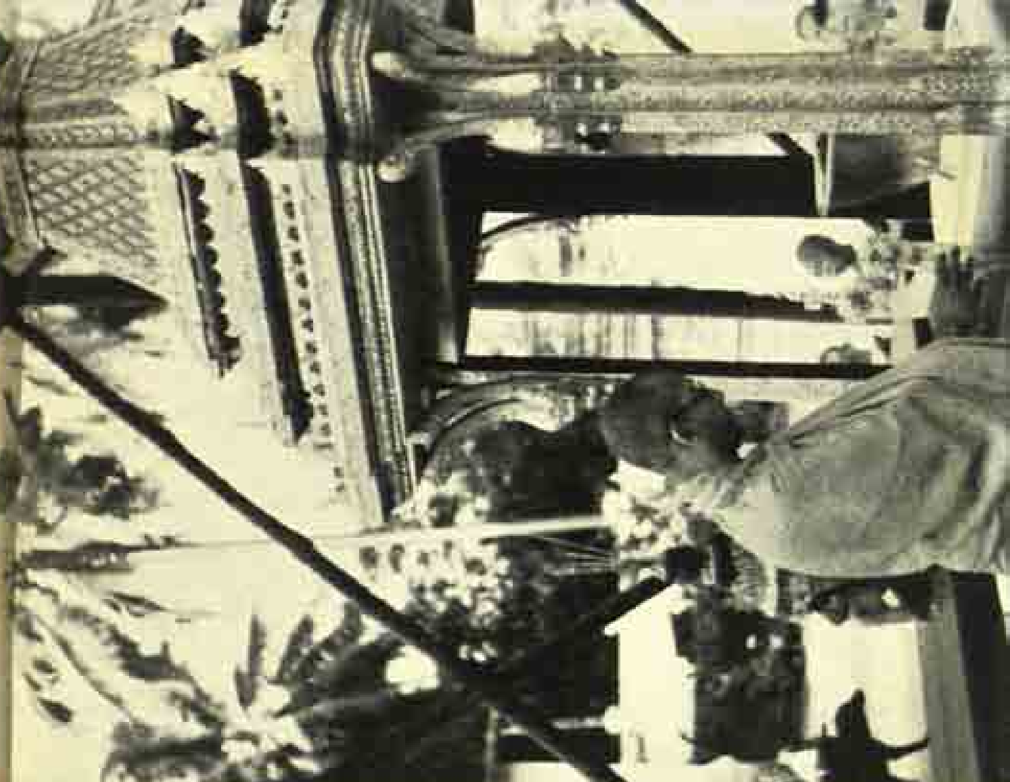
But words are real, perhaps the only real things in this world we make anew with words each minute.

On the Indus Valley seals are engravings representing objects still very familiar in India after four millennia and more.[1]

There are trees, doubtless sacred trees, and probably the *ficus religiosa* whose milk-like sap seems to have marked it from earliest Indian times as connected with the spirits. This is the holy fig-tree of Buddhism, a legacy from a distant past and reconsecrated to the new religion as the tree under which the Buddha received Enlightenment. Then there are tigers, elephants (still a Buddhist symbol from Tibet to Tongking), the ram, the humped bull or zebu, the same beast you see wandering sorrowfully through the Indian bazaars, holy, hated and half-starved. There is a seated figure in what looks

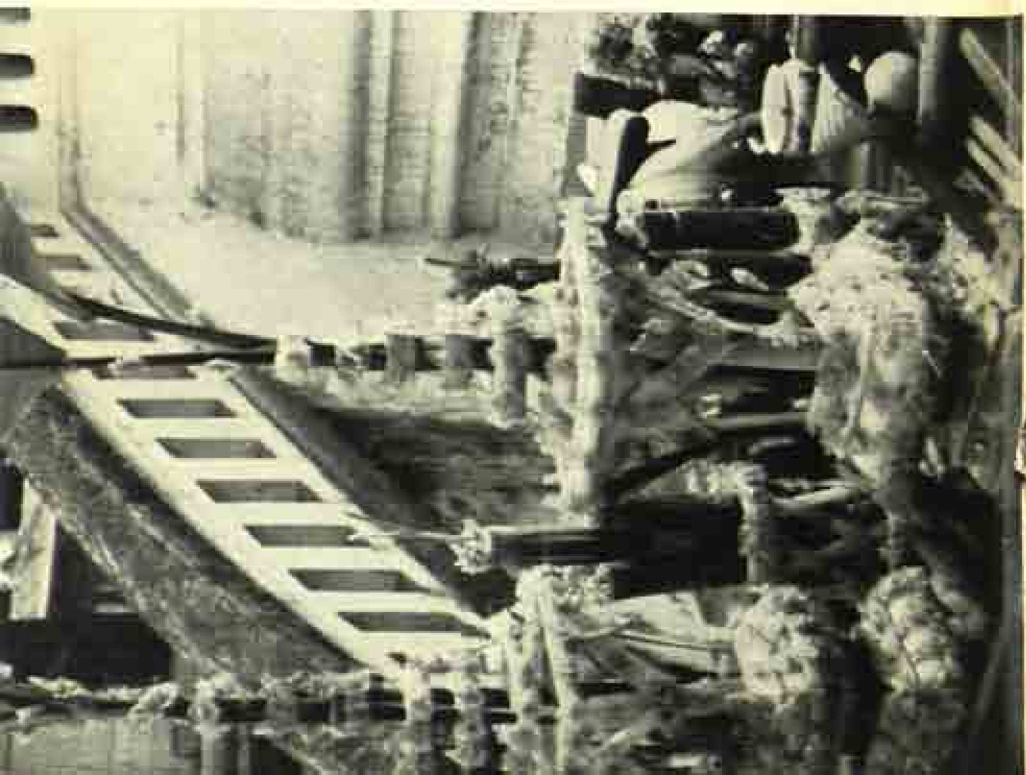
[1] On the seals are some undoubtedly Mesopotamian motifs, e.g., the cult-hero Gilgamesh, the typically Sumerian ibex and certain sorts of two-headed or hybrid creatures. Again, other motifs may have been importations from the north-west, the Iranian plateau and beyond. The excavations in the Indus Valley began in 1921 and the main sites are Harappa in the Punjab and Mohendojaro in Sind. The civilizations were of 'chalcolithic' type, i.e., with both bronze and stone implements. The Indus Valley men were traders and agriculturalists. They made good pottery (very like that from Susa in Persia). They were clever workers in metal (both for weapons and jewels)—bronze, copper, and silver. They wore clothes of cotton stuffs. Their domestic animals were the zebu, the buffalo, the camel and the elephant. Their ox-drawn wheeled carts were almost identical with those still seen in Sind. Their cities were large and fortified. The streets were wide, the houses all had bathrooms and central heating and suggest a more equalitarian society than in contemporary Sumeria. There is one type of monument unique to the Indus Valley—a building like a Roman bath with hypostyle halls—whose use is unknown.

(*Above*): *The Venerable Narada at the Shrine of the Bodhi Tree* (*p.* 62)
(*Below*): *Acolyte doing Obeisance to an Abbot* (*p.* 119)









like a *yoga* posture. In one instance the *yogi* figure is flanked by rearing serpents, in another it is supported by beasts. So the *yogi* complex of *dhyana* ('self-hypnosis' or 'meditation' which was in a measure the prototype of the Mahāyāna Buddhist Ch'an or Zen) which gives men *siddhi* or power over the outside world, may be something very ancient indeed.

Then there are dancing-girls, the ancestresses of the celestial dancers of Indra's paradise and of the Cambodians of to-day.

There are phallic symbols. To-day in India giant phalluses and vulvas carved in stone greet you at every turn and in Farther India the phallus of Shiva rises in ruins or museums.[1]

In the 'pre-Mauryan' objects from Taxila, and elsewhere, we find reproduced the symbols of the Indus Valley together with others we now regard as typically 'Indian.' The mountain, the river, the tank with fish, the holy tree, the elephant. Somewhat more rare are the sun, the moon, the so-called 'cadeuceus,' the lion, the rhinoceros, the *makara* (or 'sea-monster' which spread all over the area of Indian influence to the south-east). There is no phallus, nor thunderbolts, nor footprints nor stupas.

In the bas-reliefs of the Maurya, Sunga and Andhra periods, new motifs appear—meanders, palmettes, vases with flowers, diapers, spirals, frets, twists and animals both back to back and affronted.[2]

And these symbols and motifs—or many of them—you may see carved each one in a separate square of the checker-board criss-crossing the gigantic Footprint of the Buddha at Angkor.

Yet more nonsense has been written about symbols, their migrations and their 'meanings' than about almost any other one subject in the whole field of ethnological and ethnographical studies. In 1936 I lunched one day in Berlin with Herr Professor Clemens,[3] an architect by trade, whose chief title to fame was that he had been, at Bonn, the tutor of the Kaiser's sons. He had remained on terms of

[1] The snake and phallus cults associated with Shiva are something different from and indeed opposed to Brahmanic Hinduism. It may be that Shiva and his *sakti* (originally a Great Mother?) may have their remote origin in the Mediterranean area.

[2] Many of these magic geometrical patterns go back undoubtedly to the abstract art which was developed in the later phases of the Old Stone Age and survived through the Mesolithic to the Neolithic and beyond. Animals with interlaced necks, so familiar from the Mesopotamian seals, are known also from the Indus Valley sites.

[3] His was a traditional attitude. He complained bitterly of a 'modern-style' church just set up in Berlin or Bonn or wherever it might be. '*I*,' said he, 'like a church to look like a church'—a weighty word if one ponders on it a little.

(*Above*): *Acolytes with Offerings* (*p.* 62)

(*Below*): *'Incense Trees'* (*p.* 62)

friendship with the former Emperor. Clemens had, indeed, just got back from one of his periodical pilgrimages to Doorn. His description of the stuffy little Court in the Dutch manor, of the Kaiser's full-dress dinners and of his former master's queer way of life, were illuminating. Clemens had a bedroom under that of the Hohenzollern. 'During the day', said he, 'the Kaiser puts up a wonderful front, he is by turns gay, amiable and imperial. His conversation jumps and twitches over a thousand subjects, but at night the mask falls and you hear him pace his room for hours, for then *kommen die bösen Geister*.' But in the morning he would call Clemens to the study and subject him for hours to private reading of the Kaiser's latest work (for he wrote incessantly, though none of his books, save the autobiography, have ever, thank God, seen the light) on the significance and migration of symbols. Clemens was no archæologist or ethnologist or prehistorian but he was an erudite, learned, and in his way, an intelligent man. His comment was: 'Has any greater nonsense ever been written about any subject than about symbols and symbolism?' Well, that is perhaps going a little far, when one reflects on what has been, and still is, offered to those who for their sins can read; still, it may well be that books on symbols and symbolism do display, almost more flagrantly than any other, the essential and wide-spread vice of improper comparisons.

Perhaps half the wilful, and also the unwitting, confusion sown in men's minds comes from anachronistic and unjustified comparisons. 'Popular etymologies' are accepted secured by translations of present-day name-forms by means of present-day languages, when a little search would reveal in the documents a quite different form say 500 years ago. So it is with symbols.

The Cambodian royal trade-mark is a trident. A trident is also the blazon of the Ukraine. There was also Neptune's trident. So what?

The trouble is that the conquests of archæology and of pre-history have not been integrated into our traditional curriculum of learning. Boys are still taught (and men still teach themselves) history divorced from proto-history or pre-history. The fact is that archæology is an unanswerable mentor. It upsets so many cherished dogmas. Better leave it alone and go on with the doctrine of signatures. What looks like another thing must be related to it. Words suggest other words. Sound is better than sense and indeed, more convincing, it sings in the ears and conquers by assonance. . . .

Cambodian or Khmer

The languages of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula fall into three main groups (a) the Mön-Khmer (b) the Malayo-Polynesian (c) tongues of later importation, e.g. Thai, Chinese, Annamese and the ill-classified languages of some of the hill-peoples of the north.

Khmer or Cambodian may perhaps be held to be one of the most ancient forms of human speech. I do not, of course, suggest that we can identify modern Cambodian as the descendant of, say, the language of the 'Indonesian' invaders of Indo-China in the second millennium before our era. What is meant is that Khmer (and its related tongues) may have altered less in the course of ages than any other comparable group of languages. Certainly Cambodian sounds archaic enough, though, of course, what sounds archaic to one man may not so sound to another. Still, Cambodian does sound archaic—to me. Rather harsh and emphatic and terse and somehow inevitable.

Cambodian is extremely simple and easy to learn. The words are as immutable as in English. The phrase is composed of a subject-verb-object sequence. The adjective follows the noun. The real richness, and the only difficulty, of the language lies in its tendency to form words by prefixes and (what is more puzzling) infixes.

Thus: *do'r* means 'to walk' 'a walk' and so forth.

Thence we have *damn'or* "a way of walking."

And *band'or* to 'cause to walk.'

And *thmo'r* 'a walker.' . . .

To say 'I'm going to dine in my friends house' the words string along thus:

I go eat rice house friend I (or me).

Nothing easier. It looks archaic, too.

The modern language of Cambodia is full of Sanskrit and Pali words (written and pronounced *à la cambodgienne*, that is to say, compressed and clipped, e.g. *krut* for *garuda*, *mkot* for *mukuta* and the like) while the 'Court' language is even more stuffed with 'fine' words of Indian origin than is the speech of the people. In fact, the rigmarole in which the royal proclamations, rescripts and edicts are made up rather reminds one of the Latin-English of Sir Thomas Browne, of the euphuists or of a modern Whitehall document.

And the Siamese took over from their old masters not only a host of Cambodian words but also the tendency to welcome freely Sanskrit and Pali into the Thai speech.

Nothing, they say, broadens our minds, makes supple our spirit and clarifies our thought, more than the jolt given to our lazy word-stringing by the study of a language whose logic is in no way like our own. In fact, we find that we just cannot make our usual pretty daisy-chains because the stalks won't fit into each other.

One of the most subtle and astringent writers of our time, Monsieur Jean Paulhan, claims to have sharpened his wits and his discrimination in his mastery of Malagasy. Cambodian would have done just as well since the language must be a living, evolving, spurting speech, 'Classical' languages, dead and embalmed, however useful for mental gymnastics, are no good for giving the jolt. We must be able to hear the intonation of obscenity, the raucous glottal grunt of rut, the plaintive pleading, the nonsense and the bumbling background. We cannot get the jolt from 'texts.'[1]

There is precious little Cambodian literature and what there is, is traditional and dusty. There have been only two Cambodian authors in modern times. There was King Ang-Duong (who reigned from 1841 to 1859), who, like so many weak and unfortunate monarchs, wrote poetry. And then there was a renowned monk known under the Indian name of Mahasangharaja (i.e. the ruler of the Great Community). To these two we owe the verse and song which make up the few slight volumes of modern Cambodian literature.

Cambodian 'literature' indeed may be said to be of no value at all. It is possible that the *Reamker* (the dramatized version of the Ramayana) may have been imported from Siam. The Siamese, in modern times, have produced some books of interest but the Cambodians none at all. Miserable wars, the decay of the realm and the pervasive influence of Little Vehicle Buddhism stifled all literary expression.

As so often happens when an unfortunate people is caught in the grip of a religion its ministers and its precepts are allowed too much influence. The populations become more pious as their misery increases and they seek the excuse of dogma, creed or belief to explain intellectual poverty. All totalitarian regimes are destructive of the things of the free spirit of man, but of all totalitarianisms the clerical is surely the most baneful.

In fact, one of the nicest things about Cambodia is that there is there no intellectual life at all. When, at the beginning of the French protectorate, Cabaton made an inventory of King Norodom's

[1] Or from poverty-cursed dialects such as Gaelic (Irish or Scotch brand) which has no words either for 'idea' or for 'copulate.'

'library' he could only find about a hundred volumes consisting for the most part of works on medicine, morals, divination, liturgical matters, and collections of popular songs, translations of the Ramayana and religious books including paraphrases of the Buddhist Canon. The Buddhists of The Little Vehicle love paraphrases almost as much as old-fashioned Presbyterians. Not content with their holy books being of uncertain origin and in an unknown tongue, they felt constrained to paraphrase the very translations.[1]

His late Majesty King Norodom, indeed, was not much of a book-worm. He was more of a bon-vivant, all for wine, women and song-and-dance. He was cunning, parsimonious and an excellent politician gifted with the most precious gift a man may possess, and one too often refused to monarchs, that is, a real knowledge of the motives which move men.

This is what the bookish boys so rarely have and now that we are to be governed by men (and women) who learnt it all out of the book because their ham-strung, poverty-stricken lives would let them learn no other way, we may dare to murmur like a friend of mine, to whom an officious product of the managerial revolution said, 'If I knew as much about your subject as you do I'd do your job much better than you do.' Answer. 'No, you wouldn't, because you would still be cursed with your own wretched judgment.'

Cambodian literature, indeed, has something of the vague, diffuse, other-worldly quality of the land and people.

There are only about thirty dramas in the Royal Library and they have not ten plots between them. It needs an expert to tell one piece from another. It's always the same sort of story. An abducted princess. 'Giants' who thwart or favour. A hideous hero who eventually stands revealed as a godlike prince. Animals turned into men. Men turned into animals . . . twilight . . . timeless . . . And when these dramas are acted, that is, mimed by the ballet and sung by chorus and choir, the digressions, the interpolations are so rambling and twisting that as often as not the story changes completely and gathers a new set of characters before you are half-way through.

One example will do. It belongs to the widely-spread cycle of fairy-stories familiar to us from childhood.

[1] During the last two generations the members of the *Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient* have brought to light a good many other books in Cambodian, but the total number is still small. There are, of course, no ancient MSS for these were written in chalk upon dried skins and only stone for long resists the climate of Cambodia.

The Story of Prince Ngos

King Samalreach of Samal and his Queen had seven daughters, so the sons of the highest princes and nobles of the land were summoned that the girls might make a choice of husbands.

Six of the princesses threw their garlands at six youths, thus were they chosen as bridegrooms. But Princess Neang Pou Reachena, the youngest, kept her eyes lowered and would choose no man, but she begged to be allowed to remain in her father's Palace. The King brought other young men to her, but she would have none of them.

Now, Prince Preas Sang had been brought up in a forest by a giant, but the youth left his foster-father in order to find his real parents who had died in despair at his loss. Then, having heard of the diffident and self-willed princess, he bathed in the Golden Well and then in the Silvern Well. Afterwards, having adopted the disguise of a Wild Man of the Woods, but taking with him his magic sandals and his magic wand which gave strength, he set out to find the Princess.

When he set eyes upon so, apparently, undesirable a son-in-law, King Samalreach of Samal sought to have the wild man removed from the Palace, but the disguised Prince made himself, by magic, so heavy that none could lift him. Moreover, Preas Sang appeared beautiful and desirable in the eyes of the Princess who threw him her garland. The King, in fury, banished the pair to a hut in the jungle. When, however, the Princess saw her hairy husband stretched upon his pallet, she was stricken with despair and called out aloud for help. Whereupon, Prince Preas Sang suddenly changed his bodily form and appeared in all the splendour and strength of his youth.

King Samalreach of Samal, apprised of these strange events, sought to compass his son-in-law's death. The seven husbands of the seven princesses were ordered to bring back to the palace a hundred fish of a special sort.

Prince Preas Sang, reciting a magic formula taught him by the *yakshini* (or giantess), his foster-mother, immediately produced the hundred fish which he divided with the six other men, but, as a price of his present, he demanded, and got, the tips of their noses.

Nothing daunted, King Samalreach of Samal then ordered his sons-in-law to catch and bring to him a rare gazelle. Again Prince Preas Sang, by his sorcery, found the gazelle, but, this time, the other men had to have their ears cut off.

Then, tired, it would appear, with so much beating about the bush, Prince Preas Sang reveals himself to the King, Queen and

astonished Court as a demi-god in a blaze of glory and catches up his beloved to live with him for ever in Indra's Paradise. . . .

The Cambodian strolling mummers can spin out of this material enough drama to last for a week. . . .

A Last Night in Phnompenh

. . . as dusk gathers, the flame of the yellow robes dulls into a blur while the monks stroll back to their monasteries, since no religious must be abroad after nightfall . . . .

Then, in the soft warmth, you will catch, from afar off, the throb of the tomtoms, the plaint of the pipes and the languid, liquid water-music of the bamboo xylophones. . . .

The Night of Cambodia.

CHAPTER II

Que serions-nous sans le secours de ce qui n'existe pas? Peu de chose, et nos esprits bien inoccupés languiraient si les mythes, les fables, les méprises, les abstractions, les croyances et les monstres, les hypothèses et les prétendus problèmes de la métaphysique ne peuplaient d'êtres et d'images sans objets nos profondeurs et nos ténèbres naturelles.

PAUL VALÉRY: *Sur les Mythes et la Mythologie.*

The Road to Kompong Thom

A FEW miles from Phnompenh you cross an arm of the river. A sort of raft is tugged sideways against the current by an ancient lighter. But there are also ferrymen aboard who punt and push. Their lithe bodies ripple and glisten. The passengers, men, women and children lie, sit or crouch around my car. There are immobile Chinese with wrinkled faces shrivelled into lines corresponding to no expression or even play of muscles. There will be an Annamese or two, watchful as usual. The Cambodians just relax.

The ferrymen edge the raft into a muddy jetty. We take off from the raft's surface and get stuck in the mud of the bank. As a matter of course, I press all the passengers into my service, ordering them to shove and haul the car up to the road. They do as they are told.

Now we know why some Europeans liked the East so much.

You break from the trees and shrubs of the landing-place and churn on to a good road. The scene rolls past rapidly enough. Clearings sprinkled with palm trees. Scrub dotting great flats which for a season of the year are under water leaving the road as a levee or dyke ribboned through the muddy lagoons.

By day, you see monkeys and parrots. At night you may catch, in the flare of your headlights, the emerald gleam of panthers' eyes.

The villages are hidden in groves of slender palms, cocos, tufted arecas or fluffy kapoks . . . and dark-leaved mangoes, orange bushes bearing hard thick-skinned fruit with little juice but a sugary astringent taste, bread-fruit trees, mulberries, huge banana plants, and the imported eucalyptus which shoots up to astounding heights in this sodden soil.

Flocks of snow-white false egrets—every mud-caked grey buffalo bears one or more, pecking at vermin, on his back—pelicans and flamingoes from the Great Lake speckle the fields.

You will feel each village by your smarting eyes and choking throat. The penetrating wood-smoke and the reek of hot and pungent spices fills the air.

Anthills and long thorn.

Here and there bullock carts, Indian and slender, or fitted with a matted superstructure like a section of a gigantic drain.

The men and women are so fancifully dressed that you will think the Cambodians have no fashions at all. Some of the men, white-turbaned, white jacketed and wearing trousers, are so Indian that you are transported to Madras. The next man you see may be naked but for a loin-cloth. The women may have on just a shapeless mass of odd bits of cloth and an improvised snood or they may be draped in an ugly 'Mother-Hubbard' skirt coming right half-way up their breasts. When the Cambodians feel the sun too hot for their close-cropped polls, they cover their heads with anything that comes to hand—a large leaf, an old felt hat bought from the Chinese store, a piece of newspaper or a square of cloth like a napkin.

They are a people at their ease.

And the villages have good, sonorous, harsh names, none of your twittering Chinese or bird-like Annamese appellations. You race through Skoon, Santuk, Chaksmak. . . .

Here is a fine brick tower, a *prasat*, an early Khmer sanctuary built at a time before the ancient Cambodians had learned to raise their huge stone monuments. These older Khmer shrines are singularly like those built by the Chams whose ruins dot the countryside of Lower Annam. Did the Khmers borrow from the Chams? Or did the Chams borrow from the Khmers or did they both borrow from alien models which they interpreted much in the same manner? And why did the Chams, men of a mighty empire, never put up great stone buildings as did the Khmers and the ancient Javanese? Fashion? A King's whim? A sacred injunction? Did the spirits and the ancestors and the divine beings speak with different voices in Champa and in Kambuja? All of these are dark questions.

This *prasat* they call *Phnum-prasat*. It towers up forty feet high. Nearby are kept in a sanctuary two *prah khan* or sacred swords (not to be confounded with the *prah khan* of Phnompenh, the palladium of the realm) used for cutting the Holy Thong at the Water Festival. They are about two and a half feet long, they weigh over two pounds

each, and on their four faces are engraved the heads of an ox, a tiger, a lion and an elephant. You may not see them, but only their containing boxes of red lacquer and of black bearing inscriptions in both Khmer and sacred Sanskrit. . . .

About fifteen miles before you get to Kompong Thom you can turn off the road to the left and in a couple of miles you are at the foot of the Phnom Santuk, a sandstone ridge rising like an island in an inland sea of verdure. The western peak of the Santuk is about four hundred and fifty feet above the plain and it is crowned with a graceful monastery swathed in trees. A Pilgrims' Way leads through very Japanese-looking pines to the summit . . . and, here and there, moss-grown, grey and half-hidden are Buddhas on the rocks, and a phallus or two and some engravings . . . and then you are upon a stupa, five hundred years old and enshrining a precious relic of the Buddha. . . .

Cambodia is a country of greens and browns. As you move along the roads there are hardly any flowers at all, though sometimes, after running through the blinding, choking, bitter smoke, you are suddenly in a wave of delicious perfume—jasmin, honeysuckle and the heavy, piercing, pervading scent of the *romduol* blossoms out of which the girls wreathe garlands.

Against this background of green and brown flashes the brilliance of gamboge yellow, that of the temple tiles, of the monk's robes and of the gorgeous sunsets which, for a few minutes nearly every evening, transform the whole land into a golden paradise.

If Cambodia so often recalls India by its smells and the form of its men and vehicles, it has little of the violent colour and exuberance of Hindustan. Cambodia is neither perfumed nor gaudy and is a transition to dry, dusty-smelling China.

There are, however, all sorts of greens, from the tender pistachio of the young rice-shoots to the rich, deep, metallic hues of the jungle trees and the kapoks, cocos, oranges, betels, mangoes, sugar-palms, indigo, cotton, tobacco . . . the castor-oil plants, sesame, the glossy black foliage of the drupes, the *palma christi* or castor-oil plant, the *garcini morella* that yields the true gamboge, and the chaulamoogra whence comes the oil against leprosy.[1]

Qu'il y ait un mouvement sousmarin, sombre et sourd, qui se gonfle

[1] Chaulamoogra oil is extracted from the seeds of the fruits of *taraktogenos kurzii* indigenous to Assam, eastern Bengal, Burma and Siam, but 'chaulamoogra' is also applied to any oil containing chaulamoogric acid, such as the *hydnocarpus anthelmintica* of Siam, Cambodia, Cochin-China and the Laos.

pour empêcher les rêves de l'homme de naviguer, pour submerger ceux qui méditent et porter ceux qui agissent, qu'un typhon commence à tourner, la météorologie le fait assez sentir . . . Ce que je n'admets pas, c'est d'être enrôlé avec mes sensations, mon métier et mes scrupules, dans quelque brigade brouillonne, et de devenir le troupier d'une idéologie qui voudrait tout avaler . . . On ne pense pas sur commande. . . .

LÉON-PAUL FARGUE.

Kompong-Thom

Night fell about me before Kompong-Thom.

The Government-built bungalow is as large as a palace-hotel and, like all the hotels and bungalows I ever visited in Cambodia outside the larger towns, quite empty.

In the old-fashioned, European-dominated East, you did not worry about announcing your arrival. That was done by telegram from the administrators, or by bush-telegraph or what you will. You were always expected. People had to turn out and do your bidding whatever the hour of your arrival—so it was in the good, old days. Probably from now onwards things will be less pleasant for the wandering pink man. Maybe the long-suffering 'natives,' freed from the necessity to be servile and serving, will be less than civil in order to purge themselves of all the snakes of humiliation they have had to swallow. Briffaut, at the time of the 1848 French Revolution, when a jingo in the streets asked him why he did not wear the cockade 'emblem of freedom' said, 'Because I am free.'

The rooms at Kompong-Thom are so vast that you are not surprised to find bathroom and water-closet just in far corners. . . . The walls break into huge openings on to the velvety night. . . .

A distant corner, like a concrete loose-box, contained a bath, some ten or twelve feet square. You plug the waste-pipe, pull a chain and crouch under a torrential shower, little by little filling your pool. And while you sit propped against the polished stucco, if you drink slowly some juice of limes you have a sensation of being almost cool. It was so, in the reaction from the solitude of Cambodia after the bustle of Annam. It is not the sights, but the people who distract. In the heat of solitude, for Cambodia's heat is so quiet and slow that you cannot blame anyone for your own fluster, you are soon driven, led or allured into reflexion.

And so it fell out that in the dusk and stillness made more still by the faintest murmur of the forest, I found myself making my own legend. It seemed to me that I had ordered (!) my life to a plan, yes,

that was it, no one had guessed, had I guessed it myself? Why, of course I had, of course . . . it was not just vague rambling dislike of doing anything in particular, oh! no . . . I had worked it all out . . . I had spent half my life—why call it half? At least a considerable portion of my life in seeing and observing the things I would comment on, describe and . . . well, explain, more or less . . . later . . . Of course, fit into a plan, a pattern, in fact the artful artificiality of art . . . maybe it corresponds to a reality—well, what is a reality? I mean, maybe there really is a pattern, but we can't see it or don't, see it . . . at first. Anyway, when I re-create them, there's the pattern, did I put it in or did it reveal itself?

And the dusk, duskier, and the water, cooler, it all looked clear enough. *Mezzo del cammin* and all that sort of thing, splendid . . . It's all fitting in. . . .

On the parapet of the loose-box-bath was sitting a large, slightly glossy, male cat of the sort known as Siamese. I knew that he was a male since he was perched in a strangely uncomfortable attitude, back towards me, slowly swishing his short tale and revealing, velvet-black, his witnesses of masculinity, while his head was slewed round the better to gaze at me. Well out of the way of stray sprinkles, for even in Cambodia, the cat kind flees water. The Siamese cat watched me as I dressed—you don't have to dry in Cambodia—and followed me down the grand staircase into a banqueting hall where a thousand persons could have been comfortably seated.

I sat down under a state portrait of His Majesty King Monivong in brocaded jacket, silken sampot, Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, countless medals and the collar of his own Cambodian Order. His Majesty's puffy face, under a shock of black hair cut *en brosse*, expressed nothing but some fatigue . . . a right royal figure.

The food was appetizing—or so it seemed to me. The lime juice and soda was cold. The waiters—four of them—were Cambodian, silent, courteous and negligent. My hostess waddled in. She looked like a half-caste of some sort or other. There are some rather queer French in this Indo-China. I have met ladies who confessed to a mixed German and Japanese parentage. Rather obvious mulattos who professed to be Portuguese by origin . . . But this lady of Kompong-Thom had a marked Marseilles accent.

The cat sat up beside me during all the meal. A very nice and unusually friendly Siamese cat. He was the only one I ever saw in Cambodia or in Siam. He had been brought hither, so my hostess told me, from Marseilles.

The Story of Prince Chey-Chet

But cats do play a part in the fairy-stories and popular drama of the country as witness the story of Prince Chey-Chet.

The Princess Souvinivhar had a pet cat she had brought up from its birth and she was much attached to the animal. When she quarrelled with her father, she fled from the palace taking her cat with her. After days spent wandering in the jungle, she met the giant Seng-houm, who promptly adopted her as his daughter and lodged her in his mansion. One day, when she was bathing in the marble pool of the gardens, she was pried upon by young Prince Chey-chet, who fell passionately in love with her. She replied favourably to his advances. But her maids managed to tell the King, her father, of his daughter's unbecoming conduct. The truculent monarch sought to kill the prince, but the good giant Seng-houm favoured the marriage so Chey-chet took off Souvinivhar to his home and made her his first wife—much to the rage of his earlier spouse.

Soon after this, Chey-chet succeeded to the throne of his kingdom and had to leave for an expedition into the jungle to capture a white elephant. While he was away, Souvinivhar was delivered of a son, but Surya, the second wife, abducted the infant, shut it up in a box and, with it, slipped out of the palace. But the cat followed the wicked woman and saw her bury the box at the root of a banyan tree.

Informed of these dreadful events, the great god Indra sent down an angel who dug up the box, released the child and placed beside him the three gifts of Indra, the bow, the sword and the steed.

Meanwhile Chey-chet returned. Surya, perfumed, painted and bedecked, went forth to meet him, carrying in her arms a roughly carved log of wood which she presented as the child of Souvinivhar.

Chey-chet broke into a fury terrible to see and swore he would kill poor Souvinivhar and, since moreover, the mid-wife refused to back up the mother's story of her child's abduction (when the drama is acted the nurse whispers in an aside that she has received five hundred piastres to keep her mouth shut), so the death of Souvinivhar was ordered.

But the good giant Seng-houm knew all and sent two of his officers to the king ordering him to stay his hand or dire evil would befall the realm.

Then the cat spoke up and reproached Chey-chet with his haste and anger. So the king, who must vent his wrath upon someone,

banished Surya. Whereupon Mela, the cat, led the Court to the banyan tree where, alas, no child was to be seen! But while Chey-chet was wondering what to do next, angels from Indra brought down the long-suffering infant to its parents. And all was well.

When this pathetic story is acted as a play, there is much clowning and comic relief, so that the rambling tale is even less coherent than I have made it.

I strolled out into the village, if one can call a village a grove set with houses with here and there a clearing, a bridge or a clump of huts. Just beyond the bridge and near the bungalow was a fair with jugglers and a troop of strolling players.[1] But this *aypé* or ambulatory theatre dates only from King Norodom's time, a hundred years ago, and it is better enjoyed in the land of its origin, Siam. For the Siamese actors are more lively and subtle than the phlegmatic Cambodians. There are several modes of Cambodian drama from burlesque to tragic and from realistic to fantastic. But the most attractive shows are the informal dance-plays of the countryside and these are interspersed with impromptu antiphonal song of boy and girl choruses. Many of these folk songs are as scabrous as the *stornelli* of the Tuscan peasants. Thus:

Girls: 'I can tell you something, wise boy, no man had ever more than thirty-two teeth.'

Boys: 'That's where you are wrong. I've got forty-six teeth. But aren't you interested in anything else except teeth? Come and look for yourself and you will be delighted with the solidity of my arguments.'

The erotic references in the popular poetry are often subtle and delicate metaphors, since in literature as in plastic art, the nude is abhorred of the Khmers.[2]

The poetical improvisations of the countryside are the real poetry of Cambodia and not the pedantic 'classical' compositions written in highfalutin language stuffed with archaic words and

[1] The Cambodian theatre danced, mimed and sung, is a Siamese importation and the Siamese influence on the Cambodian stage may be compared with that of the Italians on the rest of seventeenth-century western Europe. With the exception of the Ramayana, rarely played in Cambodia, the theatrical repertoire is entirely Siamese by origin. The most popular piece is *Einao* (that is the Javanese history of Raden Panji) adapted by the Siamese Court poets early in the last century.

[2] Of course, many of the popular songs have themes familiar enough to us: the fable of the otter, the hen, the sea-eagle, the tiger and the hare who wanted to live together in the same house: the story of Kong the Brave, the Cambodian braggart or Tartarin of Tarascon: and there are satires on women's wiles, the ruses of the adulteress who hides her lover in a coffin, the quarrels between mother-in-law and son-in-law: the fable of the crab and the thunder and the legend of the fish and the net. . . .

Pali phrases. And every Cambodian is, in his way, a poet, however little he may seem like one to our eyes.

Works and Days

It is the succession of the season which marks the life of the Cambodian, as of all other peasants. The Cambodian loves festivals, feasts and ceremonies, music, games, the tales of the story-tellers, and clowns, buffoons and masks and comic interludes.

The village festivals at the New Year, the beginning and end of the monsoon, the offerings to the monks, the commemoration of the dead, all have as their official, solemn side, ceremonies in the temples or in the monastery courts shaded by the cool leaves of the great *koki* trees. But the popular, gay side is seen in the communal feasts where the table is the earth and all squat down before plates piled with rice and fish and roast meats and masses and masses of multi-coloured fruits. Then come the songs and the dance and the music lasting through the night, and you may see the Cambodians at their best; gay, cheerful, friendly, reasonably pious, greedy for marvels and enjoying all the significance of symbols.

It is more difficult for the foreigner to join in the private festivals. Sometimes, if you are privileged, you may be allowed to behold the stately, pompous ceremonies of the Court. But the birthday feasts, the rituals of the entrance of girls 'into the shade' (at the time of their first menstruation), betrothal rites and marriages the Cambodians like to celebrate among themselves.

At the New Year festival the groups of young girls and men face each other and toss back and forth a rolled scarf while they sing songs, often improvised songs, evoking the joys and sorrows of love with an abundance of images and a wealth of metaphor not seldom crude or obscene. Sometimes the songs are of a poignant beauty.

Sorrow is born at the setting sun
The kingfishers dart away
To perch by the torrents' bed.
Sadness at sunset
While playing the air of Angkor-Reach
The hymn that lulls the king to sleep.
Sorrow of the evening sun.
The birds fly off in couples
To be hidden in the tree-tops
Only my beloved and I meet never. . . .

I plunge into the forest thickets
Searching my beloved
And then suddenly I see her
Drawing water from the spring . . .
But it is not she, it is not she,
It is the morning star
Drinking on the edge of the misty sky.

Of such songs is made up the literature of the Cambodians and it is not written, it is living and therefore changing, and therefore deathless.

Il faut, disait cet homme de Mégare, *que mon temple meuve les hommes comme les meut l'objet aimé*.

Eupalinos—PAUL VALÉRY.

Not far from Kompong-Thom, at Sambor Prei Kuk, are some temples set up by King Içanavarman at the beginning of the eighth century. They are therefore of the period when Khmer art blossomed for the first time into real greatness of architecture.[1]

These sanctuaries are beautiful towers (or *prasat*) of brick. Sometimes they stand alone. Sometimes they are clumped together in groups hemmed within a square of wall.

The decoration is sober. Designs are cut into the brick which has been covered with a sort of stucco still bearing traces of colour. The lintels and the little columns are of sandstone. The decorative motifs are, generally speaking, borrowed from the India of Gupta times. The lintels are carved with medallions, wreaths and pendentives whose curve divides two marine monsters (or *makara*[2]) facing each other, their tails erect and spread out fanwise. The little rounded columns are sculptured with stylized birds and details, imitated, it would seem, from the designs of goldsmiths' work. One motif often repeated on the walls is that of the Celestial Palace peopled with Gods and spirits holding aloft minute figures of queer little men and fabulous animals. Curiously enough, among the human figures represented at Sambor Prei Kuk, are some wearing the pointed bonnet of the Indo-Scythians.

The usual headdress of the 'pre-Angkorian' (i.e. dating from

[1] There is a rather large number of Khmer monuments datable to the eighth century. Nearly all of them are of brick. They are scattered over a wide area and some of them are not in modern Cambodia at all.

[2] Vide (p. 188).

Phum Prasat: Eighth-century Khmer Tower and modern Temple (p. 73)





before the foundation of Angkor) gods is the cylindrical tiara of the Persian satraps. Persia was indeed the great reservoir of crowns, mitres, diadems and tiaras. The Roman imperial crown of Aurelian and Diocletian, and their successors, was borrowed from Persia, and from Persia spread, with royal headdresses, Persian ideas of the divine king and of the extravagant honours he should receive.

The *prasat* of Sambor Prei Kuk rise up, in appearance, as a stepped pyramid, thus symbolizing the summit of Mount Kailasa or some other sacred hill. Each tier or terrace or step reproduces on a reduced scale the terrace below. The base of the monument is sculptured in checker-board patterns, alternately full and hollow, affording a nice play of light and shadow and adorned with lotus petal and other floral designs.[1]

The sanctuaries contain but one dim, dark chamber, in most cases square or slightly oblong, but, in a few instances, octagonal. Here and there, a *prasat* shows a *cella* preceded by a corridor or vestibule. There is no sculpture on the interior walls. The roofs are disposed of corbelled bricks making what seems a gigantic chimney disappearing into the darkness as in the Mayan temples of Central America.

There is but one entrance looking towards the east (or the east-south-east), but, in some cases, false doors are sculptured on the other three faces. The centre of the chamber was occupied by an altar of stone, furnished with an ablution stoop used to receive the perfumes, melted butter, lustral water or other liquids poured by the officiating priest upon the image which was sometimes that of a Brahmanic deity—Shiva or Vishnu—and sometimes a gigantic *lingam* or phallus, such as we may see now in the Phnompenh Museum.

Although it is undoubted that Khmer art, before the Angkor period, owed much to southern Indian influences, the relationship between the arts of the Khmers and those of northern India is even more apparent, and it is easier to define and to prove. It was, indeed, in northern India that the technique of carved brick was developed. It was this technique which the Khmer architects applied with such success to their shrines during the first peak-period of Cambodian architecture. What was the exact line taken by this artistic tradition, on its way from northern India to southern Indo-China, we can only

[1] The isolated temples were apparently surrounded by fences of wood or bamboo. From the air can be seen to the west of the temples an encircling moat which must mark the limits of the capital founded by King Içanavarman.

Vientiane: The That Luong (*p.* 109)

guess, but it is not improbable that the impulse came through the islands to the south.

But even in early times, the Khmers put up some stone structures. Among these are two shrines (those of Hanchei and Sambor) of sandstone blocks and the Asram Maha Rosei—a sanctuary dedicated to the cult of Harihara. But such buildings are rare indeed.

Eastwards

Kompong-Thom is where meet the highroads from Phnompenh and from Saigon to Siem-Reap and Angkor. The shortest road from Kompong-Thom back to Saigon is by the high-road south-east which you follow without touching Phnompenh. The way leads, for the most part, through thick jungle, interspersed with rubber plantations, and you drive through two magnificent forests of no weedy, secondary growth, but of great virgin monsters shooting up so high that you cannot see their summits. You cross the Mekong River by steam ferry at Kompong-Cham, where are the remains of an early Khmer temple known as Vat-Nokor.

The Cambodian Forestry Department has, for some years past, been encouraging a campaign of propaganda to convince the people of deforestation's awful consequences. In this richly wooded land of sparse population there has not been, until quite recent times, any realization that the riches of the forest could ever fail. The 'savages' of the hills regularly fire the woods in the antique and reckless fashion, so that they may sow their primitive crops in the ashes, since ploughing and fertilizing are almost unknown among the mountain-folk. After two or three seasons, the *ray*, as the incinerated clearings are called, proves useless to the mountaineers. They move off to burn again. The trees spring up on the old *ray*, but what comes is a so-called secondary growth of soft-wood and this grows so rapidly and disorderly and lavishly that the valuable hard-woods are squeezed out. And for the last thirty years or so, the Cambodian trees have been hacked and hewn down with as little regard for consequences as showed the marauding lumber-men of the American north-west. There has been a greedy market for the hard-woods of Indo-China and it has been served by untrammelled exploiters of the jungle.

Of late years the Cambodian Government (that is, of course, the French administrators) have taken to holding forest festivals with a fair, out-of-doors theatre, movie show and the like. And the holiday-makers would be led to look upon the evils of firing and of

ravaging the woods. Two plots would be prepared. One with the young growths destroyed and the trees maimed and the soil sterilized. Another would show the trees preserved and flourishing among the reformed humus.

And to bring home to the Cambodian people their wastage of their heritage, the aid of the Church was enlisted.

At a forest festival held at Salar-Da (in the north of Kompong Cham province) the Venerable Tat, Professor of Canon Law at the Phnompenh School of Pali, preached to the crowd—and to monks come from the capital—on the evils of firing and of ravaging the woods.

As a matter of fact, the forests of Indo-China are neither so extensive nor so dense as one would expect from the climate, the rainfall and the latitude, since not only have the great jungles been ravaged, but the prevalence of sandstone soils makes for a sparse growth. In the Cambodian mountains (and in the adjoining region of eastern Cochin-China) there are huge patches of thick, tropical forest, notable for a great variety of trees (eighty to the hectare in Cambodia) and by the vigour, height and size of the valuable hard-woods such as *gu, lim, sao, trac* and so forth. And this splendid jungle has a dense undergrowth of ferns, wild bananas, creepers, lianas and epiphyte plants. However, this very thick forest does not, in Indo-China, reach up to a height of more than four thousand feet on the mountain-sides. As you move north into the hill-country of upper Cambodia, and as you climb, the heavy jungle gives way, little by little, to a subtropical forest which is a sort of stunted, feeble version of the rich woods on the lower hills. The very tall trees disappear. The undergrowth thins out and you come across clumps of rattans, bamboos and less luscious creepers. Conifers appear.

The sandstony plains of Cambodia (and the Laos) are covered by sparse forest (*forêt clairière*) with many trees which lose their leaves in winter, and even offer some signs of adaptation towards what the botanists call a 'xerophilous' condition, i.e., one preferring very dry conditions. Hence, you get the queer growths so characteristic of the Cambodian low lands, the thick and rugous bark, the sparse and twisted branches, the huge heart-shaped leaves. And the sharp grasses . . . the scenery of the *Charmeuse de Serpents*.

At the monsoon's first showers everything growing greens. The earth disappears under a carpet of dense and thick grass diapered with perfumed flowerlets. . . .

Towards the Realm of Ten Thousand Elephants and the Golden Umbrella

From Kompong-Cham a fairly good, fine-weather track leads up the Mekong's left bank to Kratié about 180 miles from Saigon and still more from Phnompenh. Kratié is a garden-settlement surrounded by the dry jungle's walls. You can stay the night at the Government bungalow there on your way northwards by Colonial Road No. 13 leading from Saigon to the Laos by Stung-Treng. The highway follows the banks of the Mekong past the Samboc rapids, dotted with islets tree-tufted and green. At Sardan you can turn off towards Sambau, where, it is said, you may enjoy the finest sunsets in this land of glorious setting suns. Here, the clouds which most often trail over the river's course are fired with a thousand hues reflected in the rippling waters. Then night falls heavily like a great velvet curtain.

Sambau was, in early times, a fairly important provincial capital of old Cambodia, but no monuments remain to attest its former importance save a graven stela and two or three guardian lions posed in the attitude of royal ease.

You strike back and rejoin the highroad at Sardan and in a couple of hours you are at Stung-Treng, but you have come thither by a road which keeps rather far eastward from the Mekong's swelling and shifting course. At Stung-Treng you are only thirty miles or so from the present frontier of Cambodia towards the Laos country stretching far away northwards to Burma and to China through the realm of Luang-Prabang, the Kingdom of Ten Thousand Elephants and of the Golden Umbrella.

Eastward, by track from Kratié, over ground which rises to the western foothills of the Annamese Chain is a region called the Upper Chlong. It is scored with the red weals of forest tracks winding round grassy knolls and then burrowing into the jungle to emerge in vales of meadows watered with clear streams by whose banks browse and stroll herds of little deer, delicate and fragile-seeming.

It is a scene from sylvan England.

By track No. 14 up from Budop in northern Cochin-China or by the so-called *piste Richomme* which breaks off just after Shoul from Colonial Highway No. 13, you can get to a permanent encampment unromantically called *Le Rolland*, whence by the Deshayes track you can, after twenty miles of going, reach a point whence you can see, if the day is cloudless, the succession of sharp ranges, all shades of blue and mauve, making up the Annamese Chain. Nui

Bara like a jagged fang and even the Nui Ba-Den peak in far-off Tay-Ninh.

This is the frontier of two worlds of the East. Beyond is China, Great and Little. Behind you these glades and woods, and forests and grassy slopes and rippling waters lead back to India.

The Land of the Lao

The Laos was, and indeed still is, a country happy in its isolation. It is land quite difficult of access. There are no railways. There is only one all-weather road crossing the country and that in the Lower Laos. Moreover, in my day, at least, that is to say on the very eve of the last World War, you did not just start off for the Laos as you would for any other part of Indo-China, discreet inquiries were made. The French liked to keep their Laos uncontaminated by foreigners.[1]

One day I set out from my modest inn and wandered off through the streets of Hanoi, capital of the Indo-Chinese Union. I was in no hurry and skirted the Presbyterian church, over-shadowed by red-flowered trees and fenced in with a thick-set hedge, which, for some reason or another, is, after nightfall, a favourite haunt of several white-robed Annamese ladies of pleasure. They move like wraiths and with considerable grace. The custodian of the Presbyterian church adds, they say, to his modest salary by toll levied upon the beauties.

Then I turned left and struck the banks of the Little Lake, a sort of aquatic Hyde Park filling the centre of the city.

I had an appointment with no less a personage than the *Résident Supérieur* of the Laos, for this high official happened to be in Hanoi. So, to calm nerves and fit myself for the ordeal, I decided to have a drink with the *baron* Boney and to find out what he could tell me about the Laos, how to get there and what to do when you do get there.

His office was right the other side of the 'native town,' between the Little Lake and the Red River, and to get to him you had to pass through long streets overhung with trees; the Cotton Street, the Camphor Street and the innumerable stalls of the ivory merchants,

[1] The total area of the Laos is just under 90,000 square miles and the population, at the last census, was just over one million. There is no all-weather road right up the Mekong Valley and the highways from the east cannot be used during the rains except for that across the Lower Laos from Dong-Ha to Kabao. Much of the Laos is, therefore, except for air-communication, cut off from the outer world for at least five months out of every year.

and the jars of the potters, and the shacks crammed with junk stamped 'Made in U.S.A.,' the lively little Japanese village of Usa, of course.

The *baron* Boney, aptly enough, owed his title to inheritance from one of those obscure worthies upon whom Napoleon so freely showered his imperial distinctions. Great-grandfather Boney's body lies buried, together with those of many other anonymous personages, in the chilly, green-lit vaults of the Paris Panthéon.

Boney was ostensibly a journalist and radio-commentator and, therefore, certainly, a government stooge and handy-man, but the *baron* also carried on a business as commission agent, broker and general merchant. When he was Press attaché, good fellow and glad-hand artist, he kept to the European quarter of the city, when he was looking after his own affairs he was generally to be found just where I was going to look for him, up a rickety stairway between the Golden Happiness Restaurant and a shuttered Annamese hotel with a wooden balcony and veranda front such as you see in films of Old New Orleans.

Boney had not gone native, in fact, he had taken out a policy against going native. He had married an Annamese, but she was an Annamese from the south and of a family Catholic for three generations. The *baronne's* determination to be ultra-European kept her husband on his feet and very, very French.

Boney assured everyone that journalism was *le plus avilissant des métiers* and that he was only in it for purely patriotic reasons, to it he even preferred broadcasting since he never had to read what he had said over the air.

The *baron* led off affably by making it quite clear that I should never get to the Laos at all and especially not to the most interesting part of it—the Realm of Ten Thousand Elephants and the Golden Umbrella. For the Laos, a country without a name, is just the land of the Lao people split into two parts—the southern and eastern, that was administered directly by the French, and the north-western, that is the said realm known also as the kingdom of Luang-Prabang ruled over by His Majesty King Sisavang Vong.

It is understood that the ten thousand elephants are white elephants and not just ordinary grey ones. Ten thousand is a lot of white elephant and there are not, it seems, really any more of such beasts in Luang-Prabang than in Cambodia or in Siam, still H.M. Sisavang Vong, as lord of so many albino elephants, bears an auspicious name and title which, of themselves, may actually cause

the number of white elephants to increase, such is the magic power of words.

Boney launched out into some sound advice, 'Why try the impossible? What you should do is to concentrate upon something really worth while. I'll back up your application for the Collar of Commander of the Royal Order of Ten Thousand Elephants and the Golden Umbrella, then you'll have something useful.' It seems indeed, that H.M. distributed fairly freely, to those who met with his gracious approval, the decorations of his Order.

'And the jewel is very pretty, in fact it was designed so that it should resemble, at a little distance of course, the jewel of the Order of the Golden Fleece. The elephants' heads are skilfully arranged so that they look for all the world like the sagging ram of the Golden Fleece while the Golden Umbrella takes on the form of the Burgundian flintlock and flame. Of course, there are a few *frais de chancellerie* to be met. . . .'

It must be admitted that the French designer and the decorations' merchants of the Palais Royal, and the Rue Bonaparte have done a noble work. Very like a whale, my Lord.

So, when we see a little sawn-off fellow with a colonial face, strutting about, let us say, at a ball at the Elysée Palace (if we are lucky enough ever to be admitted to such select parties) and wearing, apparently, the insignia of the Golden Fleece, we make take a second look.

I did not go through with Boney's proposition, perhaps secretly cherishing the hope that a munificent government might, without any *frais de chancellerie*, confer the order upon me, alas . . . for since those far off days in 1939 when Boney poured out his words of wisdom, H.M. King Sisavang Vong has gone up in the world. It is true that at the time of the Japanese defeat, when the French asked him to raise some levies to fight against the invader, H.M. replied, very judiciously, 'My people do not know how to fight, they know only how to sing and to make love,' but despite this disarming answer, the French have found it expedient to proclaim His Majesty, sovereign not only of his hereditary realm of Luang-Prabang, but also of all the Laos country. Sisavang Vong now reigns, if he does not rule, over a kingdom more spacious than that of Queen Elizabeth. What price the oriental Golden Fleece now?

Boney did not mind whetting my appetite. We traced out trails on the map. We plotted air-routes. He talked knowingly about Courts of Love, the Plain of Jars, sunsets on the Mekong and the Men

of the Mountains. He expatiated on the dangers and hazards of camping in the wilds, of fever and sudden death. And he then told me that he had never been to the Laos and never meant to try to get there.

So I trailed off to keep my appointment with the *Résident Supérieur* at the ochre palace of the Tongking administration. The Annamese usher scratched with his thick nails upon the door—no knocking here, but a ceremonial as in kings' dwellings—and I stood before the great man. He was a burly fellow who wasted no time in senseless compliments.

'Ah! so you're British, well, in my opinion all British are inhibited, *des refoulés*. . . .'

'I think you're right, but maybe one day you will find that we are not so quickly and easily *refoulés* as some other peoples.'[1]

This remark did not go down too well and the R.S. then hinted that all Britons were inverts, perverts, homosexual, addicted to self-abuse, sadists, masochists, hypocrites, stupid, dull, deprived of conversation, ill-bred and bad-mannered.

'By God, that is just what I was thinking, but remember that we are inhibited and then think what we are like when we let ourselves go. Sometimes, in this delightful climate'—the vile, penetrating, cold mist of Tongking crept about the room—'sometimes in this delightful climate, where everything and everybody, especially our French friends, encourage us to throw off conventions, I often feel like letting myself go.'

The tone of the conversation then changed.

'As a matter of fact,' said the R.S., 'I like some individual British quite well, but although I have never visited your country, nor have I been in any British possession, I know quite well what I am talking about because I have a Brazilian wife.' Quite so.

The R.S. then talked around the subject of my going to the Laos. He would have me know that the Laos country marched for quite a long way with Burma, that he had no contact with British administrators or officials, that if, of course, the Viceroy of India intimated that he would like to visit the Laos that he, the R.S., would do all in his power to make the trip agreeable, but really that he could not put himself out to go to the trouble and expense involved in arranging for anyone of less exalted rank to travel in the Laos. Moreover, the wet season was at hand (it was at least six weeks off) and

[1] Perhaps I may be forgiven for noting that *refoulés* in French means (a) 'inhibited' and (b) 'driven back.'

I could not possibly dream of wandering about in the Laos in the wet.

In fact, the R.S. was not encouraging. It is true that in this north-western corner of French Indo-China there was a long tradition of Anglo-French rivalry. In the 'eighties and early 'nineties of the last century, London and Paris had long squabbled over frontiers, zones of influence and 'rights.' But for about forty-five years no one had bothered about what happened in a part of the world so out-of-the-way that most people in our land have never heard the name of Laos.

Still, here was I, a British subject, trying to get into the Laos, the *Upper* Laos, where no one ever went, where there were only about one hundred Europeans all told. Very suspicious. And what did I want to see and to do? There is nothing to see or to do in the Laos. Perhaps I just wanted to experience a country where there was nothing to see or to do.

Out in the street, I tried to size it up. Here was I sent to the R.S. by the Governor-General himself or by his P.P.S. Did His Excellency just want to pass the buck? It is usually not wise to complain of one civil servant to another, however exalted may be their ranks, and then the civil administration of the Indo Chinese Union had been very hospitable and friendly. I had had a Government car all over the place and most of my requests and suggestions had been met. No, better try another line.

But I could think of no other line. I never did think of any other line, it just came to me of itself, for that evening I was invited to dine in more cheerful company than that of the R.S. And I sat next to the general commanding the troops; what troops I do not know, perhaps all the troops in Indo-China. The general talked war. After all it was his business and he was a general who had actually fought in a war, he had been a captain or a major in 1914-1918 and had been in touch with us and thought he might well be again. The general did not *say* that we are *refoulés*, but he did say, 'Why don't you go to the Laos?'

I hinted that time was short and that though the Government of Indo-China were pressing me hard to visit the Laos as their guest, I didn't think that I could make it.

'I am sending some officers up in a plane to-morrow, you can go with them, if you like.'

I did.

And, ostensibly, neither the *Résident Supérieur* nor any other

member of the civil administration knew that I had been to the Laos until I got back.

Up to Xieng-Khouang

It seems that, all the year round, you can get by car from Vinh on the Annam coast to Xieng-Khouang, the capital of Tran-ninh province, but you certainly cannot push through from Xieng-Kouang to Luang-Prabang except during the dry season.[1]

As you fly direct to Xieng-Khouang you leave the road far north and undiscernible from the air. The Chain of Annam seems like layer after layer of a theatre's scenery, all shades of blue and mauve. In this region of the Laotian and Annamese frontier, rather to the north of the line of flight is the site where towards the end of the war M. Fromaget made a startling discovery. He found a number of human teeth, but not human teeth of any sort of man now living or who, as far as we know, has lived upon this earth for perhaps several hundred thousand years; he dug up teeth quite similar to those of the famed *Sinanthropus*, the very primitive sort of man whose skulls and bones have been recovered from the Western Hills near Peking. So, it seems certain that, at one time, 'Peking Man' lived in Indo-China, and this is hardly surprising, for it has long been thought that these very early men of eastern Asia, the 'Peking Man' of China and the 'Ape-Man' of Java, must have represented stocks whose origin lay farther south and west. Yes, Indo-China has undoubtedly been, in the past, a matrix of peoples.

Far to your right and stretching up to the Tongking frontier is the Luang-Prabang king's province of Houaphan, a land of grottoes and waterfalls, of mountains weathered into fantastic shapes, and, it is said, of the most gorgeous butterflies found anywhere in Asia.

Only ten Europeans lived in Houaphan.

Xieng-Khouang, about three thousand six hundred feet up, lies, all the same, in a valley surrounded with high hills. There is a new European quarter, by no means exclusively inhabited by Europeans, and the pagodas are among the most archaically planned of all the Laos land.[2]

[1] As you cannot get through as soon as the rains cease since, not only has the road-surface to be reconditioned in places, but some of the bridges have to be re-built. This route from Vinh to Luang-Prabang is the *Route coloniale* No. 71, often called 'Queen Astrid's Highway,' since the road was laid out, or at least much improved, against the visit of the King and Queen of the Belgians in the '20's.

[2] Tran-ninh was for long ruled by independent chieftains until the province was annexed in 1830 by the King of Vientiane who, six years later, had to cede the territory to the Annamese Emperor. It was the French who added the province to the realm of Luang-Prabang.

To the west of Xieng-Khouang you fly over a wooded plateau, the plateau of Tran-ninh enclosing the famed Plain of Jars, dotted with monoliths from six to ten feet high. These are the 'jars,' formerly tombs of a megalith monument people, who also set up the menhirs and stone-slab graves so strangely like those near at home in Brittany. With us, in western Europe the megalith-builders were certainly sea-borne. How did they get to Indo-China?

Westward, the land is pleated from north to south in great folds each one of which encloses a river, translucent streams, into whose jade-green waters you look deep, deep down. You are approaching Luang-Prabang town and the upper reaches of the Mekong. Soon you will be among the Laotians, who occupy so little of their own country.

The Laos hate being so called; they, as the Shans, the Siamese and the Thos, profess themselves Thais, but the Laos name is one given by neighbours, and the French when they came to know and to govern the land of the Laos, called it just 'Laos.' Therefore, another designation had to be found for the people, so the bastard term, Laotians, was coined and it has now become classic.

The Laotians who, in their land, keep to the river valleys and avoid the hills and plateaux, are fairly easy to recognize, since there is no confusing them with the strangely garbed men and women of the northern hills or with the semi-savage 'Khas' of the mountains. The Laotians are, as a rule, of more sturdy build than any Annamese, and compared with the stolid and serious-looking Cambodians, the men of the Laos are gay and smiling. Their dress is quite unlike that of the Cambodians. Only the saffron-clad monks will be familiar if you come up from the south. The girls, especially, love bright colours. The usual costume is a skirt reaching to the ankles and often, if not generally, of light tint, puce, mauve, yellow or red. At the waist and the hem is a band of polychrome embroidery, green and white, purple and yellow or green, red and yellow. The women wear usually a white shift, sleeveless and cut rather low back and front, but all are girt about with a long, generally, yellow scarf, draped either as a bandolier with a long end hanging down one side or slung as a gigantic necklace like an Hawaiian garland.

The Thais

If we could see more clearly into the ancient history of the Thai-speaking peoples we should, very probably, learn not a little about the fascinating and elusive subject of Chinese cultural origins.

It is certain that, philologically, the Thai tongues and Chinese speech are closely allied. It is also clear that even in the not so remote past, that is, during the first thousand years or so of Chinese recorded history, the Thai-speaking peoples occupied an area of China and were spread up to or north of the Yang-tse River. It is most probable that the astonishing civilization of China owed its origin to a mingling of cultures and that one of the cultures was a southern stream while another was a northern. And it is not doubtful that western influences were felt in the valley of the Yellow River from very early times.

It is not, therefore, unreasonable to suppose that the Thai-speaking peoples of Indo-China represent, certainly in speech and probably, at least partly, in physical type, a cultural element which played an important part in the formation of the most imposing civilization Asia has ever known. But the Thai-speaking peoples are a people without a written history. We have no ancient specimens of the Thai languages. The Thais acquired the arts of reading and writing from their Khmer overlords and the Thai principality which flourished long ago in the present-day province of Yünnan has left no written records.

Still, there is something to be learned about the Thais in Indo-China. They cannot have immigrated so very long ago,[1] since widely separated groups such as the Shans in Burma, the Siamese, the Laotians and the Thos in Upper Tongking still speak languages which are so near akin that their speakers are mutually intelligible.[2]

Indeed, although, as might be expected, the early history of the Siamese and of the Laotians is mythical, we can probably set the time of the Thai-speakers immigrations into Indo-China at some time after the beginning of our era.

In the Mekong Valley, the Thai-speakers or Laos were long under Khmer suzerainty, although it is difficult to judge now to what extent the Khmers imposed their civilization in these outposts of their empire. But by the end of the twelfth century the northern

[1] In using the word 'Thai' to indicate 'speakers of Thai languages' there is no implication that the mass of the Thai-speakers in geographical Indo-China are necessarily of the same physical type as the Thai speakers in ancient China. Probably the mass of the Thai-speakers in Indo-China to-day are the descendants of men who adopted a Thai language from their conquerors.

[2] It is quite possible that Chinese and Thai are just one language split a long time ago into two halves each of which has followed very different fortunes from its fellow. Spoken Chinese of the third century B.C. as 'reconstructed' very plausibly in recent years by sinologues, looks and sounds startlingly different from any sort of spoken Chinese to-day.

frontier of the Khmer realm stretched up to the site of the present-day Vientiane. However, a hundred years later, the Siamese rulers of Sukhothai, independent of the Khmers, extended their sovereignty to the Mekong's banks.

By the middle of the fourteenth century, we get a glimpse of the first independent Laotian ruler, one Fa-Ngum, said to have been a son-in-law of the Khmer king of Angkor. Fa-Ngum counts as the founder of the realm of Luang-Prabang, to which he imported Buddhist monks from Cambodia. But this later Cambodian influence does not seem to have been very far-reaching and certainly not long-lasting.

In the fifteenth century, Luang-Prabang had, for a time, to recognize the suzerainty of the Annamese ruler. In 1556, in 1563 and in 1571, the land of the Laos was, like all the Thai principalities, invaded by the expanding Burmese, who transferred the capital to Vientiane.

By the eighteenth century the Laotian lands were fallen apart and ruinous. Only the principalities of Luang-Prabang and of Vientiane retained their autonomy, but it was an autonomy menaced by the Siamese on the west and by the Annamese on the east. In fact, the Land of the Laos was being squeezed, as was the Land of the Khmers farther south, and there can be little doubt that had not Europeans intervened, both Cambodia and the Laos would have disappeared and the Siamese and the Annamese would have fought out who was to control the Mekong Valley.

In 1827, the Siamese invaded the realm of Vien-Tian, the 'Moon Province' (Vientiane) and annexed it to their country. The Siamese yoke was comparatively light, the conquerors respected the customs, the laws and the language of the conquered. In fact, Vientiane was held in peace for tribute. The Annamese emperors claimed a shadowy suzerainty over most of the remainder of the Laos' land, including the kingdom of Luang-Prabang.

The immediate cause of the extension of French influence over the Upper Laos was the invasion of Luang-Prabang by Siamese troops in 1855, at a time when the French were, with great difficulty, forcing their protectorate upon the realm of the Annamese ruler. It was not until 1893 that the French demanded the withdrawal of the Siamese troops. A French flotilla threatened Bangkok. The Siamese then abandoned all claims to Laotian lands on the left bank of the Mekong, and in 1907 evacuated the Luang-Prabang territories on the right bank. A series of quarrels, bickerings and pin-pricks

between British and French concerning the Burmese frontier was finally settled by the Anglo-French Convention of 1896.

The French owe their Laotian protectorate more to Auguste Pavie, a Breton, who landed as a marine N.C.O. at Saigon in 1869, than to any other one man. Pavie, a bright lad, qualified as a telegraph officer and travelled far and wide in Cambodia learning the language and getting to know the people. Le Myre de Vilars, the first civilian to govern Cochin-China for the French, sent Pavie up the Mekong on a mission of exploration, and in 1885 secured his nomination as consul at Luang-Prabang. Pavie gained the confidence of the Laotians, took sides in natives' disputes and induced the Luang-Prabang ruler to ask for French 'protection.' Later, as French representative at Bangkok, Pavie led the negotiations preceding the Franco-Siamese Convention. The ex-N.C.O. had made good and, of course, was quite forgotten by his fellow-countrymen when he died in 1895.

He had given his country a vast territory over one-third the size of France.

As might be guessed from this story, the cultural influence of Annam (and of China) upon the Laotians has been negligible, whereas that of Siam, and, indeed, of Burma have been far-reaching. It is, in fact, difficult to unravel, in this timeless land, what is Laotian and what is foreign, what is of ancient adoption and what is comparatively late importation. Still, despite the evidence you see all round you of non-Laotian styles in architecture, of custom and of ceremony, you never feel in the Land of the Laos that you are in Siam or Cambodia; there is something distinctively peculiar in the country, and it may well be that the nonchalant Laotians, in letting foreign influence run over them, have kept themselves essentially intact. In any case, as far as the externals of civilization are concerned, it is India and not China which is present in this last outpost of Indian culture on the mainland of Asia.

Magic Pictures

It is said that of the Laotian-speakers more than half live in eastern Siam and not in the Laos, but the Siamese distinguish the two sorts of Laotians as *Lao Pong Dam*, or Black Belly Lao, and *Lao Pong Kao*, or White Belly Lao, that is to say, their own Lao who are tattooed and the Laotians of Laos who are not, at least not to the same extent. But even the Laotians of Laos are generally tattooed, though the tattooing is confined to the men.

There are, here and there, traces of tattooing in several parts of Indo-China, but the Laotians are the only civilized people to have preserved the custom. It is clear that the Laotians are connected with the Thai-speaking peoples who extend still up into the Chinese provinces of Yünnan and Kwanghsi, and also probably with the non-Thai-speaking peoples known under a variety of names and making up the medley of population in northern Tongking and northern Laos—Yaos, Meos, Kaws, Lus and others. And nearly all these peoples share the same general characteristics of cheerful contentment, kind-heartedness and love of laughter and music. And they are all tattooed.

If we study the tattoo-patterns around the world, we shall conclude that they are derived, in part, from the abstract art of Neolithic times, an abstract art which descends from the magic patterns into which the naturalistic art of the later Old Stone Age tailed off. I have made a whole series of copies of tattoo-markings on the women of the Ouled-Nail in the Djelfa Mountains of Southern Algeria. Not a few of the patterns were identical with the red-daubed figures to be found on the rocks of southern Spain, figures dating, unquestionably, from New Stone Age and early Bronze Age times. It seems probable that with the change-over from a hunting to an agricultural economy, there had to be a great adjustment and adaptation of beliefs and of customs and rites, still, undoubtedly, there was adaptation and not complete rejection of ancient faith. It may be that the schematic and stylized pictures we see succeeding to the naturalistic ones of the old hunting cultures, were felt to be an easy method of multiplying magic and magical protection, and what more natural, more logical, even in the logic of magic, than to transfer the magic patterns from inanimate things to one's own body?

Tattooing is protection. Or as the North Africans would tell me, it is 'lucky'. Tattooing does not appear to us very civilized and it is frowned upon by most religions which occupy themselves with the details of conduct. Still, the professing Buddhists of the Laos are tattooed, and, moreover, they are tattooed when they are between thirteen and seventeen years of age, just as are South Sea islanders. The rite is therefore, clearly a *rite de passage*, as the French call it, or a puberty ceremony, performed as initiation and as protection, and partly, no doubt, originally as a form of social distinction. The rich man and the powerful man could get more magic protection than his less fortunate fellows, so that, as in ancient New Zealand, some tattooing was confined to chiefs. We should do well in probing into

human motives never to lose sight of the snob-motive, the motive urging men to find reasons for despising their fellows, and you just cannot pretend to have a splendid crop of magically protective designs on your body when you have not got them.

The designs on the Laotians' thighs (and sometimes on their breasts) stand out in dark purple against their bronzed skins. There are some arabesques, floral and stylized animal designs, and there are also figures which may be matched on the New Stone Age rock-paintings of Spain, on Bronze Age utensils, and on the thighs of Berber women in the Atlas mountains. . . .

The Laotian tattooer crushes pig's or fish's gall into soot from sesame oil lamps. The mixture is left to dry and when needed is wetted with a little water. Then the tattooer gets to work and pricks the stuff in with a large needle. The operation is painful.

And the Laotian, perhaps, needs the protection of tattooing and all the defence he can secure against evil spirits, for although the people of the Laos are happy-go-lucky and carefree, and their mild and mitigated Little Vehicle Buddhism sits lightly upon them, the spirits are ever-present. Still, to this day, in a country where men are naturally, it seems, hospitable and open-handed, no stranger will be invited until the spirits have given their permission sought by offerings to them of five candles of pure beeswax, five frangipani flowers, five incense-sticks and a bottle of rice-alcohol.

All that happens to hurt man is the work of spirits. For 'primitive' men—and the Laotians, despite their real if rustic civilization, maintain many of the reactions and fundamental beliefs of 'primitives'—disaster, and the greatest of all disasters, death, is not 'normal' or 'natural.' In the Land of the Laos, the *p'hi-lok* or manes of the ancestors are jealous beings, easy to take offence and these *p'hi* or spirits and the *ho* or demons must receive propitiatory sacrifices. There is a similar underlying fear and faith in Cambodia but they are better hid. But in the Laos it may be said that all believe that ghosts come back at night in animal shape to plague the living. In animal shape. The archaic ideas which we tend to label rather too easily as 'totemistic' are all vaguely interwined with feelings rather than definable dogmas, feelings of some close relation between man and other animals.

With the *p'hi-lok*, who sow terror, and the *p'hi phob*, or evil spirits, are the numberless demons of the woods and the guardian genii of the wild. The forests are fearsome places and best avoided. The old travellers told a terrible tale of the Forest of the King of

(*Above*): *Cambodian Woman in Prayer* (*p.* 46)
(*Below*): *The Daily Offering to the Monks* (*p.* 119)









Fire, the *Dong-Phaja-Fai*, through which you had to climb to reach Korat,[1] and the journey took five whole days. The awful name, alone, of this dread jungle spread terror, and countless wayfarers never came through the deep shades, since as Pellegoix relates, in an effort, doubtless, to rationalize the legends, here and there in this jungle, the earth contains 'mineral arsenic' whose dust the passer-by breathes and with it death.

If the Laotian goes into the jungle, ill may befall him, and surely will if he there spends the night. He may disappear for ever or he may be transported to an enchanted land wherein, for long years he may chase phantoms and illusions and if he manages, at last, to escape from this bewitched realm, when he reaches his hut he will not be recognized by his relations who, having mourned him as dead, have long ceased to think of him and will be most embarrassed and annoyed at his reappearance . . . or, if he shuns such adventures, he will emerge from the great woods as a sick man, the demons have struck him with malignant fever, dragging him to the grave in a few short days.

Picanon told a curious tale of what he experienced, years ago, when he was living on Khone island, right in the south near the Khong cataracts and the Cambodian frontier. After a day of torrential showers and violent storms, in the evening as he was finishing his dinner in his house, two young women ran in upon him and threw themselves trembling at his feet imploring him for aid and for protection. Thinking that some brigand was after the women, Picanon reached for his gun and made to go out on to the veranda, but the girls sobbed to him not to venture forth alone for a *p'hi* had called to them and cursed them at the very moment they were passing the house. They tottered with him out of the windows and pointed to a bushy mango-tree in a rice-field nearby. On the tree was a bird, luminiferous in the moonlight. It flew screeching away as Picanon fired a charge of shot in its direction, and the women were reassured.

Well, not so many years ago when I was staying in an out-of-the-way part of Sardinia—and most parts of Sardinia are out-of-the-way—I was drawn out of the house one moonlit night by the howls of two of the little serving-maids, who, having stayed rather later than usual in the kitchen, would not cross the two hundred yards or so of path to their quarters until I had fired into some bushes and chased the ghost who was lurking there and gibbering at them.

[1] Korat, of course, is in modern Siam, but it is in Laotian land. Mgr. Pellegoix's entertaining *Description du Royaume de Siam* was published in 1854.

(Above): Pupils in a Monastery reading the Chapters of the Law (*p.* 122)
(Below): Cambodian Countrymen (*p.* 184)

And there are not only the spirits, ghosts and demons themselves, but there are also their servants in human shape, there are sorceresses and there are witches, and these last can, and do, change themselves into tapeworms, gnawing at your guts until you die, so the moment that you must know that you have a witch-tapeworm inside you, you must send for the wise man, who will pinch and prick you until the bewitched tapeworm crawls out in fear. There are also what are known as hereditary or innocent witches, poor women who have not acquired but have only inherited their dread arts; such innocents can be cured, it seems, and are more to be pitied than reviled.

But there was no quarter shown to wizards. If a man was marked as a wizard he must emigrate or be slain. And we may take it that in a rather 'primitive' and static and isolated community, a 'wizard' was often no more than a queer fellow who thought for himself and did not like the way of life of the majority, had different tastes in meat and drink, did not care for sports, dances and festivals, possibly was sexually aberrant, in fact the sort of scoundrel who must be suppressed if society is to be kept decent and reasonably conservative. In some communities such deviant members are more lucky and are straightway hailed as shamans or medicine-men. But the Laotians just did not like wizards at all. Before the French got to interfering with good old customs, there was an ordeal for wizards and their accusers. Two pots of boiling coconut oil were set up. Into one pot went the sorcerer and into the other his denouncer. Whoever got out of his pot first was cracked over the head and disposed of.

So, underneath all the easy-going, good nature of the Laotians lie, when the conventions are outraged, some definite reactions of a rather violent kind. One wonders what has happened to these reactions now that they cannot be released in a right and proper and traditional way. For, if we can say that the Laotians have little or no religion, in the sense of a way of life or a moral discipline, they are filled and informed with beliefs.

On the surface, as you see the face of the land on coming up from Cambodia, the framework of Little Vehicle Buddhism looks much the same as in the land of the Khmers. There are the saffron-robes, but the bonzes are sturdier and less composed than in Cambodia. When the monks do their rounds with their begging-bowls, the holy men do not hesitate to look women in the face, to speak with them and even to touch their hands. The Laotian bonzes are not the less Laotian for being bonzes, and by no means all of them observe strictly the precepts of their Order. In fact, some of them are

a little loose of conduct. Again, the Buddhist hierarchy in the Laos is almost more sacerdotal than monastic, and, in the public estimation, the bonze is more or less of a priest, that is, a man performing efficacious and quasi-magical ceremonies. There are temple-schools, as in Cambodia, Siam and Burma. In these schools the male population learns to read and write in the complicated Laotian script that is rather derived from Siamese than from Cambodian. The same moral obligations are supposed to constrain the monks. The offerings at the pagoda services are just fragrant frangipani flowers, candles and incense. There is no such divergence from Little Vehicle practice as would make of Laotian Buddhism a new religion such as is the Lamaism of Tibet. But everything is a little distorted, vague, misty, if we will. The alien religion is subjected to a strong push from beneath and is transmuted by an all-pervading atmosphere of nonchalance and good humour. . . .

You have only to watch one of the popular festivals and it is difficult to spend only a few days in the Laos without living a Laotian feast-day. Take the *Boun Dueun Ha,* that is the New Year festival, and also that of the Little Oath (of allegiance that is). The festivities are held at the beginning of April, thus at the time of year when the days are hottest and the nights most suave.

In every village there will be a procession headed by youths bearing branches of flowers. Then will come two files of men carrying the sacred umbrellas. Afterwards six or eight men bearing upon their shoulders a palanquin, in which sits the chief of the local pagoda. The monks and their acolytes holding urns full of flowers and jars filled with lustral water, bring up the rear. So far, so good, it all seems an orderly and decent religious procession.

But as the *cortège* advances, the women on either side of the way throw buckets of water on the processionists, while the girls pelt them with mud. When the *cortège* has reached the pagoda, the whole people stand round joining in the antiphonies of praise sung in honour of the Blessed One and then fall back in a circle to watch the dances.

And these dances are not at all Buddhist. There are three main performers. There is the dragon Sing, and there is the Ngo Gneu, and then there is the Pou Gneu. These two last represent 'ancestor' spirits and their impersonators wear curious masks and their bodies are covered with beasts' skins. The wooden masks are black and swathed in streaming hair which twirls as the dance moves on. Pou Gneu has a pumpkin-like face with a huge toothy, grinning

mouth such as you may see in a Hallowe'en goblin. And the ancestors' ghosts come back to plague men in animal guise. And masked men, robed in beasts' skins, we know, figured in magic ceremonies of later Old Stone Age men in Europe twenty-five thousand years ago.

In May is the Feast of Fireworks, that begins with a decorous temple service and then, after nightfall, the big drums start to throb. All night long men hammer at the buffalo-hide tambours, breaking off only to make the rounds of the village where, at each house, they drink rice-alcohol, and so the Firework Festival goes on, with rockets whizzing in the sky and the bass drums rumbling, a holiday of drunkenness and gaiety prolonged for three whole days.

The Festival of the Great Waters, in July, is not unlike that in Cambodia, but more spontaneous and fairy-like. Then there is the Cake Feast in October and then at the Hunter's Moon, the Festival of the Great Oath.

These are some of the official court festivals in the realm of Luang-Prabang, but the local, village feasts are more revealing of the Laotian as he is. The Courts of Love, singing all night long, and the funerals, for the funerals in the Laos are gay ceremonies. When a man dies his body is covered in perfume-soaked sawdust piled into a hardwood coffin—the Laos is a land of fine, hard-grained woods—and the whole is placed upon a catafalque near the house. The bier is watched day and night by youths and maidens who sing songs, improvise poems, crack jokes, make love, and play musical instruments, while, from time to time, but not too often, the Buddhist monks come and read sutras of the Good Law. Cremation is not so strictly observed as in Cambodia, but most bodies are burned, at least in the towns and larger villages. After the incineration comes the Feast of the Appeasement of the Spirits. A covered altar is set up near the dead man's house, and on the altar are offerings to the manes or ghosts, offerings of frangipani flowers, of rice, of betel, of alcohol and of swords. And all night long, the women dance archaic-sounding, rhythmic measures to the tunes strummed out by an orchestra. And although Laotian music has borrowed from Siam and from Cambodia, and although, despite the borrowings it passes for one of the less rich of all oriental modes, the Laotian orchestra can furnish a poignant and evocatory woof for a web of dreams.

And so the time slips by, each moon of seven nights, each month of four moons, each year of twelve months, each cycle of twelve

years, each era of twelve cycles, and then no more time-count, you begin again at the beginning. In the Laos you can perhaps get a glimpse of what is meant by some of the more recent parables and metaphors of the physicists when they are trying to make our dull senses realize just what time is, or is not.

And the Laotians like to laugh, that is to say that they like to enjoy the circumstances which move them to mirth and then they like to go on laughing because laughing makes them, as all of us, feel happy. That is the train of action. Something incongruous brings laughter as commentary, as refuge from confusion, as a means of self-promotion, and once we laugh, we laugh more. Laughter to produce a state. And, if it is incongruity which moves us most to laugh, then those are most happy who live in a society full of conventions whose breach is ridiculous, provided, of course, that such a breach is not such a sin, such a crime and such a misdemeanour that laughter outlaws us. The Laotian has plenty of conventions, but he feels they are made to be breached. Happy people.

The Laotian is cheerful and serene and contented, perhaps from some strange physiology of his glands, of his bodily make-up and of his environment, or of all of these, but he is most of all happy because he has but few needs. His bamboo house on stumpy piles costs nothing to make. He has no furniture, no chairs, no tables. He sleeps on a mat. There may be a few bowls in his hut, but most of the meal is served on palm-leaves. His food is simple—rice, salt fish in brine, raw pork chopped up and smothered in a pungent, aromatic sauce, cakes of rice and bananas (and delicious they are), and he eats iguanas, alligator's eggs and red ants.

When he is not swigging *lao*, or rice-alcohol, he drinks water and uses tea—Laotian tea is poor stuff—as we did until a few generations ago, as medicine. The men and the women both smoke and often they smoke *pan*, a sort of hemp, not unlike the Moroccan *kif*, but the Laotians mix their *pan* with tobacco. And everyone chews betel.

The Laotians' ideal in life is to chew betel, to drink rice-alcohol, to make love and to sleep—they are very good sleepers. Their economy is still half pre-agricultural, hunting and fishing afford food and amusement, and amusement, of course, because men are not wholly dependent upon the product of the chase. Hunting is only a sport in those communities where you don't have to hunt to live.

The Realm of Ten Thousand Elephants

The Kingdom of Luang-Prabang, despite its meagre population, does extend over what, in almost any other part of the world, would be a great area. In addition to the province of Luang-Prabang itself, and that of Houaphan, that you see from afar rolling away in mauve and azure waves to your right as you fly up from Vinh, there is northern Phong-Saly marching with Chinese Yünnan and the jumbled mountains of western Tongking. In all this Phong-Saly there are no more than fifty Europeans and few enough Laotians. It is a land of sandstone and red clay, a fore-taste of the Yünnan wonderland. It is a country of peaks and pinnacles and hills weathered into fantastic shapes, of mist-shrouded valleys and of mountains, for the most part, stripped, as in China, of their forests. For Phong-Saly is a region of a hundred peoples, many of whom burn the vegetation to sow their hardy crops. A region of a hundred peoples, immigrants from the north like the Thais themselves, of the tall and graceful Lu, of the Phu Noi, of the Meo, broad-faced and cheerful, whose women wear immense turbans rolled and rolled and twisted to inverted cones, of tribes half-naked, of tribes gorgeously robed in complicated fashions, of the A Kha from Yünnan, a people whose jingling, bold-eyed women induce some fanciful Frenchmen to call them the gypsies of Indo-China. And then there are the Kha Khmu, negroid, dark and squat, without doubt an ancient stock showing something of that pre-Indonesian type once spread far and wide in all Indo-China. And each group lives isolated from its neighbours by language, customs and tradition, and even by style of architecture. One would hardly think that such variety could be displayed in setting up a bamboo hut. If Phong-Saly were to be explored archæologically and checked by ethnologists, we should, doubtless, obtain a mass of information throwing light on the dark subject of immigration to and emigration from Indo-China in the near and in the remote past, for the passage-way of immigrants must ever have been through the hills and down the valleys leading from south-western China. Farther west, the great mountain mass blocks progress.

There is a relatively small area known as the *Haut-Mékong* wedged in between Luang-Prabang, China, Burma and Siam, but the *Haut-Mékong* is no part of the Realm of Ten Thousand Elephants and is directly administered by the French, who gained their footing here during the negotiations, quarrels and manœuvring between France and Britain in the eighties and 'nineties of the last century.

The capital of the *Haut-Mékong*, Ban-Houei-Sai, on the left bank of the Mekong, is full of immigrant Burmans.

Luang-Prabang

The artery of the realm is the Mekong and the veins its tributaries. On the banks of the streams the Laotians have their villages and towns. As you circle down towards a hidden airfield, the country seems blue-veined in green until, as you lose height, the blue veins appear hemmed with yellow, the banks of alluvial soil where alone of all their spacious realm the Laotians will live. And around you is a brightness of hue and of colour which are hardly of the tropics. The air is warm but it is not damp. The encircling mountains are sharp of outline, yet soft in their mass. And they are all shades of blue, just as are the crystalline serrated ridges of the Annamese Chain, as you see it from the east when climbing up and over the range on your way westward. But these Laotian mountains are not cliffs, they are magnified downs and they are bathed in western light, not stark in the piercing radiance of the east.

And such is the influence of prejudice or prepossession that you find yourself murmuring, well, yes, this is the natural frontier between east and west, it is not at all astonishing that here we discover the last legacies of India, we shall understand it all better. Yet there was, for ages, a flourishing, Indian-patterned civilization installed and rooted into the glittering riviera of what is now the southern Annamese coast bordering on the China Sea. But the realm of the Chams has long since faded quite away and we cannot picture to ourselves the atmosphere and the background of its people and its rulers.

Luang-Prabang is on a tongue of land between the mighty Mekong and its affluent, the Nam Khan, and the town is built around the Phu Si or Holy Mountain, another and much more magnified *phnom* such as you have at Phnompenh. When you get to Luang-Prabang, the first thing to do is to make for the *Résidence* and announce your arrival, which is well known anyway, but I just passed in with the boys and no questions asked. Evidently there was to be no clash of authority over my modest person. In any case, as there are only about fifty Europeans in the whole province of Luang-Prabang, it is no great task to keep a tab on them.

I cannot pretend to talk with much experience of the Laos, for I did not stay long enough in the country to receive more than impressions, and it may be that had I stayed longer, my impressions

would not be so vivid, neither would this half-hidden paradise have seemed so paradisial. It would be exciting to explore those deep, jade-green valleys you spied from the air, to paddle up the winding rivers swirling between flat banks dotted here and there with palms, to stumble across the frail bridges perched on X-shaped piles. I did not even get up to the Pak-Hou grottoes only about sixteen miles (or a day's canoe trip, so strong is the current) upstream from Luang-Prabang. These caves gouged in the face of high cliffs overhanging the river are full of Buddha statues, among which you may trace, they say, the evolution of the peculiar and fascinating stylistic Laotian statuary-convention of to-day. And these grottoes, if they have not been cleared of all their natural fillings, might yield some capital evidence of earlier men's residence in this matrix of peoples.

A few miles after Pak-Hou is the mouth of the Nam Hou, from whose upper reaches and from the banks of its tributary, the Nam Pak, comes the finest and most prized benzoin in the world. This is the incense that is not much used in the Farthest East, but still is shipped down to Bangkok whence it reaches Europe as 'Siamese benzoin.' In the olden days, at least, the bulk of this precious perfume was sold into Russia for use in the ceremonies of the Orthodox Church. During the First World War, we British, as guardians of the blockade and as masters of the sea-route to the East, had to give a high priority to shipments of benzoin into Russia. And, of course, quasi-magical substances have ever been as potent as more immediately useful ones. What would the faithful have experienced in Old Russia had their nostrils suddenly been startled with the odour of frankincense or just the vulgar resin of the Norwegian Christmas tree? Probably the faithful have, in the last few years, got accustomed to substitutes, though I have been told that the Soviet Government still authorizes the import of Laotian benzoin. Church and State.

In the kingdom of Luang-Prabang there is no doubt that Little Vehicle is the state religion. We have seen how royally and respectfully, H.M. King Sisavang Vong received the Venerable Narada and his slip of the sacred Bodhi Tree. And the efforts of the French administration to purge the practice and reform the discipline of the monks was mildly successful in the Laos though not so obvious as in Cambodia. Still, the Laotians are difficult to coerce. Most of the Laotian pagodas are a mass of jumbled ruin. Others are in sore straits. Still, there is an abundance of temples in Luang-Prabang itself. The sixteenth-century That-Luong has been restored, as has the old

Royal Pagoda. There is the ruined Vat-Manorom, built it is said, in 1372 to shelter a colossal statue of the Buddha, of which only the bust and head have survived. And there is the Pagoda of the Crystal Statue, which statue was carried off in 1827 by the Siamese to Bangkok. Any criminal who reached the Temple of the Crystal Statue could claim absolute asylum—in the olden days—but now the building is breached. And there are many more, temples and stupas.

The *that*, or Laotian stupa, is as imposing in size as the *vat*, or temple. Sometimes, but rarely, the *that* is just a dome, like the stupas of Ceylon, then, again, it may be bell-shaped as in Siam and Burma, but the peculiar Laotian form is bulbous and elongated into a sort of spire which, however, shows a peculiar section, ridged at four corners and bulbous between them. This shifting outline lends a pleasingly impermanent air to the pinnacles jutting up above the feathery fronds of the garden-city. So, despite botching in the Siamese taste, and manifest foreign influence, the Luang-Prabang pagodas with those of the Tran-ninh province, have retained much of their archaic character. But although there may be buildings in ancient style there are no very ancient monuments. The oldest still in use cannot date farther back than 1500.

The plan of the *viharas*, or temples, is similar to that of the Cambodian. The familiar fig-tree spreads its glistering leaves over the sacred enclosure. But the architecture is quite different. Gone are the twisting, twining eaves, the fragile, delicate fretwork of the modern Khmers. Here the temples are rectangular and whitewashed-over brick. The roofs are high and deep and drop far down, giving the whole structure a queerly Oceanian or South Seas appearance. Within, the walls are richly frescoed with floral arabesques and geometrical designs on a red background. The doors and shutters are adorned with presentments of giants, garudas, polycephalous serpents and the phantasies of Indian legend. A rich, and often lavish, display of enamelled lead-work, gilded stucco and panelling inlaid with chips of looking-glass, does not detract from a general appearance of elegance and strangeness, due not a little to the curious Laotian convention of battened openings. Windows and doors all have sides converging from base to top and even the pillars and columns taper. Here must be some lasting tradition of wooden-hut architecture still preserved intact by more primitive peoples of Indo-China and Indonesia.

It seems that in the olden days, when the Laos lands were rich

in gold, the temples were sheathed in gold sheets so that the sanctuaries seemed precious reliquaries.

And, within, at the far end, in the half-gloom you will see a great image of the Buddha, often of lacquered and gilded brick, an image quite different from the representations of the Blessed One in any land or at any time for the last two thousand years. The narrow long face, the jutting aquiline nose, reminding you sometimes of the curves you see on masks from the Sepik region of New Guinea, the daemonic expression, the short head (the Laotians themselves are predominantly short-headed), the visage all features and expression and almost no face. You are a long way from any other interpretation of the Hellenistic inspired Buddha image. Here, in the Laos, you have a South Seas Buddha, a Buddha assured indeed but active and not contemplative. As you look at him you are inclined to think that the Laotians may not be so simple a people as they seem.

And then you go out into the shapeless streets of straw huts and tall trees, of a European-style house here and there, of spires and steep roofs, of a brand-new royal palace, of bamboo huts on piles with three compartments, two for the public and one sacred to the family, and all the movement of colour.

There stroll by the Laotian girls, lazily self-possessed and free-seeming, and, if it is a feast day, gaudy with satin and velvet and gold and silver thread and innumerable bangles and necklaces. Slung over their shoulders is not only the yellow scarf but the black and gold lacquer *nécessaire* containing the betel-chewing outfit—scissors, lime-pot, nuts and tube for the wax you smear on your lips so they may not be seared with the astringent juice. . . .

Laotian women seem never to have been parked and compressed into any sort of seclusion. Divorce is easy and a manner of seeking it was most charmingly civilized. If a husband had reason to think that his wife did not like him, he placed flowers upon her pillow. If she could still tolerate him, or if she had not any new plans, then she left the flowers untouched for three days. If she desired to get rid of her man, she threw the flowers away, whereupon he walked out and got a divorce. . . .

And at the Love Courts, the *phousao* and the *phoubao* the girls and the boys are free and equal, at least as far as the conventions rule.

But I do not know how fast all the life of this paradise may be changing. It seems that the French expeditionary force is changing all the ways of Indo-China. Most of the soldiers are, of course, in the Annamese lands where, in 1948, fighting was still

bursting, here and there, throughout the countryside of the three countries of Cochin-China, Annam and Tongking. But forces are kept also in Cambodia and the Laos. In 1946, five thousand half-castes were born. In 1947, it is said, over one hundred thousand, and not a few of these in the Laos. These children will remain with their mothers, they will, most of them, be brought up as Cambodians, as Laotians or as Annamese, but many of them will not be Cambodians, Laotians or Annamese in their physical adaptability, however fully they may be absorbed culturally. The peoples of Indo-China have, for long ages, become adapted to the environment in which they live. The wholesale grafting of new stocks upon the old will inevitably result in the production of a population many of whom will support ill, the climate and the environment into which they were born. How many of us throughout the world are really unsuited to the climate in which we have to exist?

Down the Mother of Waters

From Luang-Prabang you can drop down the river by motor-launch in two or three days and watch the skilled watermen in their dug-outs punting or paddling through the treacherous reaches of the river. On your right bank is a chain of steep cliffs, or of slopes dotted with great grey boulders showing through the trees, or again, the ravined red soil is shabbily patched with sparse forest. Eastwards the mountains slope down to the Vientiane plain and cover a wild region, almost uninhabited, save by elephant and beasts of the jungle.

Nowhere in the Laos is the big-game shooting as good or as exciting as in Cambodia or in Annam. It is forbidden throughout the Laos to shoot elephant except in self-defence and the rhinoceros is as rare as in any other part of Indo-China. The Chinese have, for centuries past, imported vast quantities of rhinoceros horn for medicine and for carving into those rhinoceros horn cups now so sought after by collectors. No cups have been fashioned now for a century or more and, indeed, many are broken up and ground down to supply the demand for tonics, aphrodisiacs and antidotes among the Chinese. But in Mouhot's time, not a century ago, rhinoceros was fairly common in all the region between the Meking and the Annam Range, and the old traveller whose body lies buried in the jungle not far from Luang-Prabang, tells a vivid tale of his hunting:

'We were eight men, all armed with guns. Mine was fitted with a sharp bayonet. The Laotians carried only iron javelin-blades mounted on strong bamboo sticks, but their chief had a long, sharp

sword, not heavy, but very supple and almost unbreakable. After about two miles march through the forest, we heard the branches crackle and the dry leaves rustle. Motioning us to slow down and to hold ourselves ready, the chief strode forward. Soon we heard a piercing cry. It was the chief's signal that the beast was not far off. Then the chief began striking two bamboo rods together while his men shouted so as to force the rhinoceros from his lair. A few minutes later, the animal, furious at being disturbed in his retreat, came straight at us. He was a very large male. With no sign of fear, but as joyful as though he were sure of his victory, the intrepid hunter advanced towards the monster and, with poised lance defiant, awaited the onrush. The animal charged straight forwards, his mouth wide open and alternately raising and lowering his head. Just as he came within range, the man flung his javelin, from a distance of about five feet, into the beast's mouth. Then, he left the weapon in place and walked back to us. We remained at a respectful distance in order to watch the rhinoceros's death-agony without danger to ourselves. He gave out the most terrifying roars and rolled on his back in dreadful convulsions while our men shouted for joy. A few minutes later, as the beast was vomiting streams of blood, we were able to approach him. I then shook hands with the chief and complimented him upon his skill and courage. He replied that I alone had the right to finish off the quarry and this I did by ramming my long bayonet into its throat. The chief, having jerked his javelin from out the body of Behemoth, offered the weapon to me and asked me to accept it as a souvenir. I gave him in exchange a magnificent European dagger.'

Note the tone of the story in the real, good old tradition of the white man and the faithful native. It is more than probable that the chief had fortified himself with some powerful magic, since he was so sure of himself and of his victory. Well, maybe his aim was adjusted and his nerve steeled by the magic. Words can do all sorts of curious things; raise our adrenalin content. . . .

The Moon City

Vientiane strings along the left bank of the Mekong and it faces almost due south over the expanse of eastern Siam's great bulge. Vientiane is quite a large place and has grown from 1900, when it was refounded, into a town of over 10,000 inhabitants, with a Government-owned bungalow and two rather modest hotels. In the Upper Laos, as a rule, there are no hotels at all, you either camp

out or put up in a *sala* where you can get eggs, chickens, rice and fuel very cheap. In the olden days, at least, before the last war, you could get by in the Laos very comfortably for ten shillings a day.

The Moon City was once a town of sanctuaries and held, they say, over eighty pagodas, but there are now only twenty-four, most of which are in ruins. The place was thoroughly sacked by the Siamese in 1827. The Sisaket pagoda has been more or less restored, and here take place twice a year the ceremonies of the Great and of the Little Oath, this time to the prevailing government in France and not to the Lord of the Elephants and the Umbrella. The Phra-Keo Pagoda or Temple of the Emerald Buddha, is, by tradition, supposed to have been founded in A.D. 814, but it was razed by the Siamese and the Emerald Buddha was carried off to Bangkok where it may still be admired in its gorgeous temple. Needless to say, the Emerald Buddha is not carved out of emerald. It is fashioned in green jasper and is undoubtedly of Laotian workmanship, for the image, as you can behold it in the Siamese capital, has a most Laotian face, vehement, cunning and, it may be, lecherous.

The sight of Vientiane to-day is the That-Luong. This large stupa is some mile and a half outside the city and is set in a palm grove. The buildings seem to date from about 1567 and were put up to shelter a relic of the Buddha. The sanctuary was spared by the Siamese. However, in 1874, the Chinese Yünnan land-pirates, who feared neither God nor man, plundered and ravaged the shrine. It was botched up unskilfully, but, a few years ago, was restored to its pristine appearance through the efforts of the *Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*. The stupa not only shows the curious bulbous spire we noted at Luang-Prabang, but the whole place is uncommonly complicated in plan. It is surrounded by a cloister in the Siamese mode and the stupa itself rises from a series of rectangular terraces set round with numerous pinnacles joined together by an arcade. The photograph in this book gives a good idea of the That-Luong as it appears to-day.

Some of the Vientiane and the Luang-Prabang temples still contain a number of bronzes, mostly of the Buddha, seated, upright or reclining. These figures, which have only just begun to appear in the European market, are already rather keenly sought after and soon may become quite rare. The Laotian bronzes show a high degree of stylization. The long fingers are as supple as tendrils, while the feet are harsh and squared as though hacked out with a hatchet. The chest is taut and rounded, the waist exceedingly

slender. The heads and faces are of the same style as those of the stone or lacquer images we saw at Luang-Prabang. Under the curved nose, the thick lips are pursed up into a rather disdainful pout, which in some statues takes on what must be called a leer. From the topknot flares up a burst of flames conventionalized so as to resemble a budding daffodil . . . all rather super-realist.[1]

The Lower Laos

The Lower Laos is, essentially, the slopes and plateaux making up the steps leading to the ridge of the Annam Chain which falls as cliffs to the shores of the China Sea. The Laotians have pushed down the Mekong valley and up the shores of some of its tributaries. But even in the Mekong Valley the population is sparse. Thakhek, Savannakhet and Paksé are just over-grown villages strung along a stream whose navigation becomes increasingly difficult, until at Khong and the Cambodian frontier the cataracts bar all passage, since the range of the Dangrek Hills, which borders northern Cambodia as a line of cliffs, offers a wall over which the great river's waters pour and seethe. Miniature mountains, sharp, jagged and steely, rise from the froth, and as you look at them, so violent is commotion around, that you lose their proportion and seem to be gazing from a height upon some of those barren, inhospitable islands fringing the Scandinavian shore. The red waters of the Mekong, so sleepy and so slow, a few miles up, now boil into white steam and you realize why the upper reaches of the river have so long preserved their integrity.

Laotian settlements, it is true, stretch down as far as Stung-Treng right into Cambodia, where the thin forest is always the same, though bursting here and there into richer vegetation. But the Laotians keep close to the main stream, and Cambodian influence does not cease to grow at the expense of Laotian among the 'savage' peoples off the Mekong's highway.

So now we can take leave, as the travelogue commentators say, of the Laos, after a short glimpse at its curiosities. The French writers and the French propagandists when referring to the Laos never fail to tell us of its marvellous resources, so 'undeveloped.'

[1] The ancient Laotians seem to have been skilled in the difficult art of large-scale bronze-casting. From what remains of the Buddha in the Vat Manorom at Luang-Prabang, the original image must have stood over eighteen feet without its pedestal. Often the Laotian Buddhas have a date engraved upon them but it is only a cyclic era date so that no absolute chronology can be established.

'Development' was to be the future of the Land of the Laos, get out the tin, the coal, the hard woods, the copper and God knows what, make the Laotians sweat, import labour, bring in, with labour, still more Chinese sharp-dealers and still more Annamese shysters, dig out the hills and hack down the woods. Cut the country up with roads, open it up, to what end? There are already more than 2,500,000,000 human beings on this earth, most of them sickly, undernourished and unhappy. Much of Indo-China and nearly all of the Laos are regions of small population and, in general, rather contented populations. The only obvious misery is among the sprawling, spawning millions of Annamese on the deltas to the east. The Laotians and the tribesmen to their north are among the most contented people on this earth. They would not be contented long if their country were 'developed' and 'opened up.' Until 1939, it looked as though nothing could save these peoples from the blessings of the foreman, the boss, the workshop and the mine. Now, all European overlordship in eastern Asia has suffered a set-back. We are out of Burma, the French maintain a precarious foothold in Indo-China. France—like Britain—is in parlous financial straits. No, there is not going to be much 'development' for some time to come except that furthered by a motley horde of soldiery stationed on the country. . . .

The Angkor Road

The villages slip by. Groves with a few houses. Sometimes there is a larger settlement. A market. Pile houses. The bungalow of a Cambodian official. Wooden shacks, godowns, shops, Chinese and Annamese market gardens. Stalls set with sticky cakes covered with flies. There is always something dusty and musty wherever the Annamese and Chinese settle.

For a long time there will be no other vehicle but your own upon the road and, indeed, you hardly ever see a private car, but sometimes you are caught in a whirl of bicycle-tractors, taxis and Chinese buses, glaring red or brilliant blue, stinking, roaring, spluttering and crammed to the gunwales with a motley crowd daubed here and there with saffron yellow. The Chinese have little or no idea of keeping any piece of machinery in order even if it is their own. . . .

And with flivver, more and more ousting bullock-cart, have come the concrete buildings along the highways. The Chinese are the cement traffickers and they care not at all what blight they sprinkle

over the land. I have seen a cement and stucco Charlie Chaplin outside a Buddhist temple and some of the modern monastery buildings vie in horror with the abominations the Buddhists of Ceylon have raised with British best cement at Anuradhapura and Kandy.

A distinguished old gentleman said to me in western China just before the war, 'I suppose you will end by infecting us all with the poison of patriotism' . . . well, Western influence is successfully destroying Chinese taste and infecting the Chinese with some additional vices even they had not acquired.

Monks, Ghosts and Cowherds

Cambodia, it has been well said, is a country of monks, of ghosts and of cowherds. If the highroad is often monotonous and dull, turn aside from it for a few hundred yards and the centuries will drop from you.

Before you will be a scene from the bas-reliefs of Angkor—those of the Bayon or Angkor Vat which we shall soon see. In bush villages I have come across the same canoes, the same country carts, the same curved sickles, the same potter's wheels, the same musicians' instruments, the same sorcerers even, as are portrayed on the walls of the Khmer temples. The zebus shuffle along between sharply upturned and curving poles . . . and then surprisingly at every *sala* (or public rest-pavilion) the aerial fretwork, the curved carvings, recall the back-boards of Dyak houses in Borneo, of proto-historic Irish and Danish sculpture . . . and the whole *sala* is improbably, impossibly, like the medieval wooden churches of Norway. . . .

Far-reaching calm fields and rice-lawns.

The clicking of the loom.

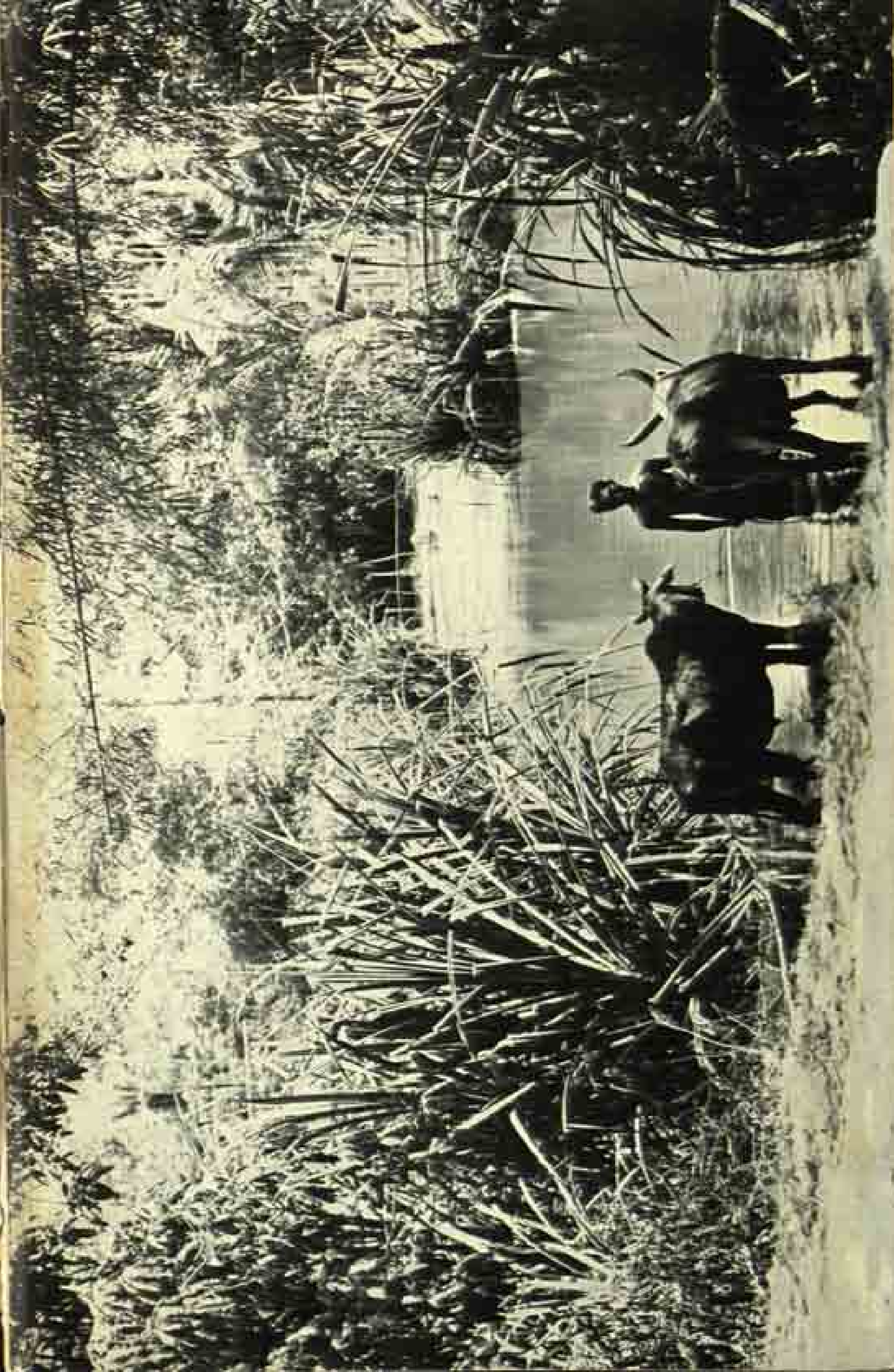
The swishing crackle of the sugar-palm's leaves. The rapid patter of the children's naked feet as they run after cattle.

The cackle of the boys and girls fishing for minnows in the paddy-fields.

In the *beng*, the fertile low-lying wet lands, with the sugar-palms and the rice, are the lotuses whose seeds seem unripe almonds . . .

At night, you may get a glimpse through the wide-open doors of candles, of offerings to the Spirits of Food, the peasants' eternal gods . . . while the village augur indicates how the newly-married

The Siem-Réap River (*p.* 130)





couple should go forth at dawn and receive the mystical blessing of the dawn's first rays. . . .

And, as night falls, come the chanted litanies from the temple.

And will-o'-the-wisp lights dangling, bobbing and dancing in the dark.

The abbot of the neighbouring monastery will come and visit you. Monks and nuns are all inquisitive. Once when I was bogged in the remote recesses of Bessarabia, an abbess did fifteen miles in her sledge to come and get me out and to invite me to spend the night in her convent-fortress.

The abbot will come and visit you, but he will not eat with you, nor may you eat with him, though, if he likes you enough to let you into his monastery, you may watch him, shaved, yellow-robed, right shoulder and arm bare and cross-legged like a Buddha-image, slowly eating his rice and frugal meal from off the ground, since no monk, be he youngest novice or powerful patriarch, must eat from a table. Before the abbot, on his mat, will be a teapot and plates piled high with råw fruit and vegetables. He wears no badge of rank. His costume is the same as that of all monks. The beggar's yellow robe. An acolyte will be crouched in the corner. Around the white room will be a few of those neutral, geometrical-patterned objects allowed by the cult. Fans shaped as a gigantic fig-leaf and adorned with a design of superimposed squares so slewed as to form in outline an octagon enclosing a circle.

No gorgeousness. No exuberance. None of the majestic magnificence of Northern Buddhism. Silks and splendid robes and imposing ceremony in noble sanctuaries. . . .

But if they let you into one of the larger temples at service-time, the scene can be impressive enough. . . .

The yellow-robed monks upon their mats, the abbot in his golden pulpit shaped as a backless throne. He is perched high above his monks . . . the low chanting in Pali, the calm, the inevitability, the whole picture, in tones of yellows and gold and gilt, dull, gleaming, merging into the shadows as the glimmering pool ripples away to the shade. . . .

If you get on really friendly terms with an abbot, and the Cambodian, for all his seeming dullness and gentleness, is acute enough to sense what sort of pink men he has to deal with, if an abbot thinks you worthy, you may be invited to an ordination ceremony. And, it is far better to be invited by the Cambodians themselves than to be imposed upon them by the local French

Mother and Son (*p.* 131)

administrator . . . really one of the most boring things in life is to be classed, by people you rather like, into a category of people you rather dislike, but with whom you are eternally and irrevocably identified. . . .

L'ame, enfin, sur ce faîte,
A trouvé ses demeures.

PAUL VALÉRY.

Few things in the West surprise and, indeed, amuse, the Chinese more than the deference paid in some countries to the salaried ministers of organized religion. Few things in our social plan are more agreeable to the Indian or more comprehensible to the Little Vehicle Buddhist, be he Sinhalese, Burman, Siamese or Cambodian.

Little Vehicle Buddhism has no priesthood, but the communities of monks form a powerful *imperium in imperio.* In Cambodia there are not less than three thousand monasteries for less than three million people. And these monasteries house some sixty thousand professional monks. If we reckon those who assume the yellow robe for relatively short periods there must be, at any given moment, about a hundred thousand, or even more, ecclesiastics in the country.[1]

For Little Vehicle Bhuddism is a monkish thing and in the lands of its sway nearly all the men spend some part of their lives—it may be for only a few days, it may be for many months—as monks. And the custom had, at least, one excellent result. Long before the arrival of arrogant pink men and alien overlords, the Buddhist peoples of Indo-China showed a surprisingly large number of men who read and write.

The Church is, in Cambodia, divided into two groups, let us say high and low, since the differences between the two is ritual only. But the groups have a social significance. The bulk of the Cambodians attend the services of the *Mohanikay*, whereas really smart people go only to the *Thommayet* churches, formerly pro-Siamese—and possibly so still. Formerly, both 'high' and 'low' were under the supreme authority of an 'archbishop' or head abbot of the whole *sangha*, that is Church. But none has been appointed to succeed him who died in 1914.

[1] There are about 24,000 temple schools where Cambodian boys learn to read (in Pali and Cambodian) and to recite the sacred *suttas* or verses of the scriptures. But Buddhism sits lightly upon the Cambodian (though not so lightly as upon the Laotian) and under the Bhuddist varnish the underlying animism is generally visible.

One meets such nice people at the *Thommayet* churches.

The monks mingle with the people in a way members of few priesthoods can or will. Every day the yellow-robed men set forth carrying their begging-bowls and march in Indian file through the streets to gather the offerings of the faithful. Each housewife will put a dab of food in the bowl. The monk receives his alms with bowed head (for he must not raise his eyes upon a woman) and no expressed thanks. Each monk has, attached to his person, an acolyte. Some of these boys in their turn become professional monks. Some go back to civilian life, their education ended, their edification achieved. The community permeates the life of the people. The monks are dissatisfied when the faith is ignored and their influence as a consequence diminished.

As, owing to rivalry between Great Britain and France, Siam remained the only independent state between Persia and China, the French were concerned from the beginning of their protectorate over Cambodia to secure the country against a revival of Siamese claims to overlordship (whether cultural or political) which had so often been successfully advanced in the past.

The French were not slow to see that in Siam the Buddhist clergy were the prime movers in all anti-foreign movements and that, in Burma, the mass of the monks was not only resolutely anti-British, but was also becoming accessible to Japanese influences.

The French wisely decided that one of the best ways of combating foreign influences among the Cambodian clergy would be to raise the standard of religious teaching throughout the country. Hence the foundation of the Pali School, of the Buddhist library, of the Buddhist Scripture department and the like. The scheme has been very successful. The churchmen felt well disposed towards the government and the age-old alliance of Church and Court formed a solid pro-French front.

The French have had, it is true, not a little trouble in Cambodia since the collapse of Japan, but it is as nothing compared with the bloody mess in the Annamese lands. The mode of French control has been changed. A parliament has been established. French influence will be more discreetly exercised, but in all essentials the French are in Cambodia back where they were before.

Is it Little Vehicle Buddhism which so smoothes and composes the faces of its devotees? Or did the old Khmers, whom we can only see in stone, seem as filled with contentment as their descendants?

It may be so, the famous Khmer smile is perhaps only the stylization of a common expression. It is possible that this people is as they say, naturally at ease. Still, we know what a new creed and a new religion can do, first in moulding a people to a fresh profession of comportment, and then by selection in fixing this comportment as a second nature. In early medieval times the Tibetans were famed as the most ferocious bandits, warriors and marauders of all Asia. Under their peculiar Law of the Buddha they have become one of the most peaceful of all communities. . . .

Nevertheless, you cannot but be struck with the apparent happiness—or, if we cannot define happiness, let us say absence of apparent tension, anxiety and worry—of the Little Vehicle Buddhist peoples of Indo-China (I do not know Ceylon well enough to pass judgment upon the Sinhalese). Nothing matters much. Nothing is irrevocable. Now, or in another reincarnation, until annihilation rewards the virtuous and the lucky. Buddhism is atheism, though often it is hard to believe it so. Buddhism is essentially Indian in that the urge out of men to make Gods is not stilled, but the godlike men of Buddhism in becoming Gods cease to exist. . . .

'True joy,' wrote that expert in souls, Saint François de Sales, 'can only come from interior peace, and this peace itself is the gift of a good conscience.' If we look around us in almost any western European land we shall admit that most of the visages are stigmatized with sadness, more than malevolence, and with anxiety, rather than with the baseness we might expect.

Early Buddhism, or what we may call early Buddhism, though it was not the doctrine of the founder and of his immediate disciples, was a way to be followed by a select company of faithful grouped into communities of monks. This early Buddhism was, thus, monastic and its objective was the formation of *arhats*. The ideal was inactivity and contemplation. After Buddhism had been patronized, fostered and promoted by the Emperor Asoka, a change set in. Rather suddenly, about the beginning of our era, there is a *volte-face*. Activity, once so condemned, is admitted and regarded even as sanctified if performed in the service of others and purged of self-interest.

The *Bodhi* or supreme knowledge, making men superhuman and eventually Buddhas, was held to be open to every one, nay, every man carried It in himself and had, indeed, carried from all eternity the potentiality of the Knowledge. The universe was conceived as peopled by an infinity of Buddhas and Boddhisatvas (beings capable

of becoming or on the way to becoming Buddhas) grouped around the Buddhas.

This is the Mahāyāna or Great Vehicle, so called because it was held by its adherents to carry along and to convey a greater number of creatures than did the 'Little Vehicle.'

The history of Buddhism in Indo-China is curious. The ancient Khmers were either Buddhists or Hinduists according to the fancy and taste of their rulers. But the Buddhism was the Mahāyāna or Great Vehicle of Sanskrit tradition as opposed to the Hinayāna or Little Vehicle of Pali tradition.

In fact, among the Khmers Buddhism and Brahmanism existed side by side. After the collapse of the Khmer Empire and the Siamese conquests, Khmer civilization was stifled and the resignation of Hinayāna spread over the land.[1]

Taking the Robe

Three or four days before the novice or postulant undergoes his ordination, he must, carrying a tray upon which are three lighted incense-sticks and three lighted candles, pay visits to his family and friends. He says good-bye and is congratulated.

On the afternoon before the ordination, the postulant is entirely shaved, hair of the head, of the eyebrows, of the face and of the pubis. Then, clad in the richest robes he may possess, or can borrow, a silken sampot, a white scarf over his left shoulder and adorned with jewels, the future monk proceeds to the temple. He is often on horseback (the bridle held by a friend), and he is sheltered by parasols. Other friends and relations go before bearing and scattering flowers and carrying the garb and gear of a neophyte—the begging-bowl, the mantle, the outer and inner vestments, the shirt, the belt, the razor, the needles and cotton (for a monk must, of course, do all his own sewing) the mat and the pillow. All a monk may use but not possess, since he may possess nothing but his own soul.

[1]Ceylon has remained the great reservoir of Little Vehicle Buddhism. The island was culturally linked with northern India from the first century B.C. to the sixth century A.D. Then, suddenly, we do not know why the culture-contact switched to southern India. There was a marked drop in artistic achievement and the new peak in Ceylon was reached long after India had sunk into the new decline of the ninth and tenth centuries.

Ceylon was evangelized to the Little Vehicle. Later the mystical and ritualistic tendencies of the Great Vehicle spread from India until, by the fourth century, each was struggling for the mastery. By the twelfth century, the Church was "purged" and Little Vehicle remained triumphant.

Generally a band, playing gay music, leads the procession.

The postulant walks three times round the temple walls while a mummer or a clowning musician feigns to bar the entrance. The postulant is playing out, in sacred drama, his own version of the Buddha's life. The fellow is vested as a prince and surrounded by his court.

He is about to make the Great Renunciation.

Within the temple, he prostrates himself before the image of the Blessed One to which he lights candles and incense-sticks. Then he takes up his seat on the ground near a tray on which are his vestments as a monk. There are, in the temple, a group of not less than ten monks. The senior in age officiates, assisted by two who play the part of godfathers. The other monks are the witnesses.

One godfather presents the postulant to the assembly while the other informs him of the obligations of the religious life, while reminding him that the monk's garb may not be assumed by parricides, monks who have been excommunicated, madmen, idiots, deaf-mutes, the infirm or the impotent.

The questions are read to the postulant.

'Are you really a man?'

The rules of many religions[1] require of their ministers a full virility—often to deny it normal play.

Then the postulant is asked:

'Do you suffer from piles?'

Piles distract one's attention from the study of the law and, moreover, they render prolonged sitting painful . . . as the irreverent French say: *cette incommodité qui rend douloureux même le saint-siège.*

The Commandments are read.

The postulant's head is shaved. The yellow robe is draped about him and the begging-bowl is placed in his hands.

The hot climate, the scanty food (the monk eats but once a day and never of meat), and the pressure of opinion will keep most of the monks true to their vows of chastity, at least as far as heterosexual

[1] Cf. the supposed medieval practice of examining the genitalia of a newly-elected Pope. The traditional phrase pronounced by the examiner was *vero habet et bene pendentes*, cryptorchism was held to disqualify. Sexual abstinence, like fasting from food, does, of course, produce in those who practise it, a number of psychoses which may be usefully employed for religious ends. But, essentially, the sexual intercourse taboo is as mysterious as the inbest taboo about which we can at least say that it was definitely not established because men had observed the ill-effects of consanguineous unions. Everything 'unusual' is for 'primitive' men (and for many who do not think themselves so to be) the work of supernatural powers.

intercourse is concerned. But if, as that maleficent, cunning and acute old clown, Mussolini, used to say, *le génie c'est les génitaux*, we know why Little Vehicle monks all appear a little dull. Still, some of the older brethren are often perky and bright, but then either they have outgrown their virile needs or they have been marked out for preferment, and preferment has given them power, and the exercise of power makes old men cunning.

Carrying his vestments on his arm, the postulant salutes the assembly three times and then the officiant, who exhorts the novice to follow the precepts of the faith.

The postulant is told to kneel and to repeat in Pali, after the officiant, the demand for admission.

Then, in his yellow robe, with his begging-bowl slung around him, the new monk approaches the assembly and the officiant confers upon him a *chaya* or special name to figure in the Formulary of Consecration and on the identity records. Follows the last exhortation.

The monk may not kill, nor steal, nor fornicate, nor, above all, must he ever claim to have attained the last degree of sainthood—the recognition of this blessed state must be left for the Assembly to decide. If any of these rules is infringed, the monk will be expelled from the Order and never again may he wear the yellow robe.

And, moreover, he must always wear his robes, he must always beg his food, he must live under a tree (so the monasteries are always sheltered by protecting trees) and he must use certain medicaments known as *bhesajja*—supposed to quell desire.

The ordination service is over and the members of the public make gifts to the ten monks of the assembly. The new monk takes up his quarters in his *ket* or stilted hut, beneath the shade of the banyans and the mango bushes and within the monastery enclosure. A monk must never leave his monastery alone. Sometimes he is accompanied by a novice, but generally by one or more child acolytes (aged from ten to fifteen) who proudly carry the monk's umbrella.

About seven o'clock in the morning, the monks set out on their begging round, and when they return to the monastery they confess their faults to some older monk. Then they eat. A second and last meal of the day is taken about eleven o'clock.

The monks' only regular occupations are prayer and teaching. In the afternoon, the pupils surround their *kru* (that is the Cambodian form of the Indian word *guru* or 'teacher') from whom they learn to read, to write, some arithmetic, some instruction in manners and

morals and to recite in Pali some of the scriptures. Moreover, the monks, on certain fixed occasions, read and expound the *dhamma* (or 'Law') to the general public.

With regard to prayer, there can be no doubt that many of the monks, and almost all the laity, consider that petitions are offered directly to a Buddha who can hear and intervene. That is to say, for the mass of the Cambodians the Buddha is a deity. The more learned monks and the higher clergy realize that the Buddha can no longer hear or take heed, but these men, however they may phrase their point of view, hold, essentially, that not only is it a good thing to give praise, but also that such worship is, subjectively, of value to the worshipper.

But the theology and the philosophy of the Cambodian clergy is weak. You might go far before you could get any definition (much less an 'orthodox' one) of, for instance, the *nirvana* concept, and, although the Cambodians are solidly 'Buddhist,' their clergy is undoubtedly less learned and less subtle and possibly less spiritually minded, than some of the more outstanding members of the monastic order in other Hinayāna lands.

On the Road

Un voyageur solitaire est un diable

HENRY DE MONTHERLANT

Although I did not suspect it, Kompong-Thom was my last stage of a delightfully lonely journey. At Siem-Réap, the queer characters, the ridiculous promiscuities of the 'colonies' were to break in, and although I was not thereafter thronged, I did not again recapture, until my last strange nights at the Azure Pavilion, the voluptuous solitude of the first days.

From Kompong-Thom the Angkor new road follows the old imperial highway of the Khmers. Until 1912 you must travel through Cambodia in boat or ox-cart, or upon elephant back, and until the middle 'thirties you had to reach Siem-Réap by boat across the Great Lake.

Fifty-five miles this side of Siem-Réap, on the Angkor road, you cross the Spean Prapto's bridge of laterite blocks put up by the Khmers a thousand years ago. It is nearly two hundred feet long and fifty wide. On either side, forming parapets, are long serpents' bodies rearing up, at the bridge's entrance, to seven-headed hoods. As the Khmers knew no arch, their corbelled supports must be very close

together and the Spean Prapto's has no less than twenty-one of them. Most of the old Khmer bridges now form solid walls, or barrages, so blocked are the interstices between the upholding piles. Nearby, just to the right after you cross the bridge, is the track running off through over thirty miles of rich hunting country to the ruins of Beng Mealea.

On either side of you are rice-lawns or forest often flooded by the waters of the Great Lake. You cross the Roluoh river. Northwards the tracks lead to the ruined sanctuary of Prasat Chao Srei. You can follow the Roluoh down to the old Khmer town of Roluos where, in 893 A.D., King Yaçovarman dedicated four towers to the memory and the spirits of his father, his mother and his maternal grandparents. At Prah-ko ('Sacred Oxen' *rectè* Prah-Go) King Indravarman consecrated thirteen years earlier, a shrine to his divine ancestors.

There are ruins, monuments, palaces, shrines, sanctuaries and temples all around. You are in the heart of the most remarkable region of ancient monuments of the whole Far East.

You are approaching Angkor.

Siem-Réap

It is difficult to say whether Siem-Réap[1] is a town, a village, a township or just a forest with houses, villas and huts sprinkled about in it. The forest is traversed by a delightful stream running down from the Kulen Hills into the Great Lake and Siem-Réap covers, more or less, the site of a Khmer settlement which must have played to the Angkor Athens the role of a Piraeus. No doubt, it was the nearness to the Great Lake, and thus to an inexhaustible supply of food, as well as the convenience of the Siem-Réap river as a highway for floating down, at high waters, building-stone from the quarries, that determined the Khmer rulers to fix their capital city at Angkor.

Although Siem-Réap is the nearest thing in Indo-China to a tourist-resort, there have never been, at any one time, enough tourists to blight the place. There is, it is true, one enormous Government-built hotel, pompously named the 'Grand Hôtel d'Angkor,' and a more modest one in the settlement (the 'New Siem-Réap Hôtel), and a rather agreeable rest-house near Angkor itself. There is an 'airport' five miles away, and it is said that hydro-

[1] 'Siem-Réap' means 'Siamese Vanquished.'

planes can touch down on the waters of the Baray. I have not seen any try so perilous a manœuvre.

If you stay at the smaller hotel in the town (as you will if you are wise) you will look out on to sandy tracks which are not roads or streets, for they have no alignment, no definite shape or width, and no pavements. Save for the rich growth of trees and shrubs, you might be in one of those sandy Sahara settlements such as Tozeur or Nefta in southern Tunisia.

Over against you, and slightly to your right hand as you stroll out of your rather hugger-mugger hostelry, is a monastery surrounded with a wattle fence over which you can see huts on stilts, for all the world like the dwellings of a South Seas island. These are the monks' cells and from them, in afternoon and evening, comes the low drone of the religious reading the stanzas of the law, and the shrill treble of the boys' voices gabbling, stumbling and scrambling in their repetition of the holy words. Learn it by heart. Get it by rote. The little Cambodians must get the words of the law as pat as little Moroccans must get the text of the Holy Koran. And words so driven in when we are very young are more potent than any others. They have a real existence. They are the bricks men make their world with.

When the first ancestors of ours sat up and fiddled with bits of bone and wood (perhaps only later with bits of flint and stone), they were set on their way to talk, and if we can think because we can talk, most of our thinking is but word-play and grammatical acrobatics. How different would have been the Message of the Buddha had it been conveyed in any other than in such highly developed and subtle languages as Sanskrit and Pali? The language leads the thought. The words pour out and then, why, it's a life's work to find the real meaning, a meaning too often hidden at the first glance. Of course, it's hidden, it's hidden in our own minds. . . .

Beyond the Oceanian huts are the white, pointed stupas and the white stucco-walled temple with swirling eaves and gamboge yellow roof-tiles.

You feel the heat beating like the throbbing of a gigantic heart.

A little farther on, you turn to the right again and are in this amorphous market-place of brightly-coloured fruits, of flowers and of dull, windowless box-like shops. Here are the Chinese merchants. Here are the Annamese traders. The Cambodians sit on their haunches, crouch or stroll. No one begs you to buy.

Les Chinois qui font métier de marins profitent de ce qu'ils sont dans ce pays pour ne pas mettre de vêtements. Le riz est facile à gagner, les femmes faciles à trouver, les maisons faciles à aménager, le mobilier facile à se procurer, le commerce facile à diriger. Ainsi, y en a-t-il constamment qui se dirigent vers ce pays.

So wrote Chou Ta-Kwan at the end of the thirteenth century and what he said is as true to-day as when he visited the Empire of the Khmers.[1] The Chinese who have travelled and settled in Cambodia for many centuries have left there more signs of their physical presence than of their culture. The traces of Chinese ancestry are, indeed, visible among a high proportion of the Cambodian town-dwellers—for the Chinese do not settle in the out-of-the-way villages. On the other hand, the recognized Sino-Cambodian hybrids (of whom there are fewer and fewer each year, since, for some time past, the Chinese have brought their own women with them to Cambodia) form a group distinct from the other Cambodians.[2] Nowadays, in the second or third generation these Sino-Cambodians tend rather to sink back into the mass of native Cambodians rather than to remain assimilated to the Chinese minority.

The Chinese immigrants nearly all follow the same career. They arrive penniless coolies, lean and hungry. Within a few years, they are fat and flourishing and retire to the back of the shop to direct business from an armchair while their clerks and salesmen bustle about and their children of all ages help in furthering the family fortunes. The Chinese overseas will not till the soil unless they are goaded by absolute want. They know well enough what is the life of the peasant and they think that the men who provide our food need faith and lots of it.

The Chinese of Cambodia are not more than 120,000 strong as against over a quarter of a million Annamese. But the Annamese in Cambodia are as hated as the Indians in Burma. For the Chinese, the Cambodian has considerable respect. He knows that the Annamese get

[1] Chou-Ta-Kwan's travel book was first translated into a European language by Abel Rémusat at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but no one paid much attention to Chou's record until one memorable morning on 22nd January, 1861, Henri Mouhot, caught sight of Angkor's towers red in the sunrise and out-topping the high jungle's growth. The late Paul Pelliot re-translated Chou's record in 1902 and it is from the later version that the extracts here are taken.

[2] Interbreeding with Siamese and also with Annamese has left marked traces in Cambodia. Of old there was intermarriage between the Courts of Siam, Annam and Cambodia.

the business the Chinese don't bother to run after, and he finds it quite natural to be fleeced by the Chinese whereas he much objects to the Annamese scale of profit. Every Cambodian with daughters to marry off, dreams of a Chinese son-in-law, a member of that magic stock which conjures riches out of the earth and waxes fat where others die off in misery. And the Chinese, as a rule, though things are changing fast, grows more and not less reasonable through prosperity. If the Chinese does not allow his breast to be becalmed, his manner becomes more benevolent as he grows richer.

The Chinese of Cambodia (as elsewhere overseas) are mostly men from the South, and therefore, the quickest-witted and most intelligent, if not the most wise and stable, of their kind.

They are also exceptionally law-abiding, and the French check very carefully those whom they let in. There has been no such infiltration of Chinese Communists as into British Malaya. The Chinese of Cambodia are men of peace, and especially respectful of the faith, the superstitions and the prejudices of the men among whom they live and get their living. No two concepts of life could well be more opposed than those of India and China. The overwhelming religious sense of the Indians has no counterpart in China. The Chinese are superstitious enough in the face of their fear of the unknown, but they have little sense of sin, of desire out of men to make gods, they hardly think that all the monstrous 'injustice', cruelty and implacability of the world is a punishment for man's wrong-doing. Rather do they feel in the words of the *Dreigroschenoper*: "*für dieses Leben ist der Mensch nicht schlecht genug.*"

The Chinese merchants and tradesmen of Cambodia are willing and even generous subscribers to all the Buddhist festivals. They consider, and justly, that Little Vehicle Buddhism keeps the people where they ought to be. What a godsend for a commercially-civilized people, such as the Chinese, is a religion bidding the faithful to eschew gain and to seek reward in another reincarnation: The Chinese ply every profitable trade. They are bankers and usurers. There are no Indian *chettys* or money-changers in the Cambodian provinces and few enough in Phnompenh. Business is too difficult in the face of Chinese competition. Jews do not willingly settle in China or Greece or where there is a large and active Armenian community. . . .

The Chinese are truckmen. They are carters and carriers. They buy the crops before they are planted. They will sell you anything and anyone. And when the short, intolerable Cambodian summer

lies like a pall upon the land and the people die more readily than at other seasons, then the Chinese brings out his coffins and does a roaring trade. No wonder the poor Annamese do not get much of a look in.

The Blue Zoo

In bell-shaped, bright blue cages, aligned like pillar-boxes in an avenue's shade, is a collection of the birds, the beasts and the reptiles of the land. It does not cost much to stock a zoo—none of this business one reads of, open-eyed, in the newspapers of such and such a circus having lost a tiger worth £5000 or an elephant of double the price—two days in the jungle, with very simple equipment and half a dozen 'boys,' and you will come back with a barrel full of monkeys, or what you will.

Each cage is carefully labelled in French and in Cambodian. Moreover, there are notices in Cambodian exhorting visitors to practise kindness towards the animals. Citations from the Buddhist scriptures[1] are added to give additional weight to the objurgations.

The Cambodians are not particularly cruel to animals nor are they given to needless torture of human beings. The climate is too hot for much *Tierquälerei*. It is in the temperate zones that men must just lash out at something living, and capable of quivering.

I am often inclined to wonder what has happened to the sum of perfectly bestial cruelty to animals which, in my young days, one met with on every hand in England. The 'Kindness to Animals' injunction is, in Europe, and with us, quite a novel thing, unheard of a hundred years ago and, perhaps, only possible to enforce in a country with a great deal of money available for disbursements connected with the minding and mending of others' morals. England was the hell of horses not only in the sixteenth but also in the nineteenth century. You cannot get much enjoyment by flogging an automobile. What has happened to the urge? Well, it has been said that many of our fellows get married largely because they must have someone to quarrel with. Or can it be that we are less irritable than we were?

[1] Analogous quotations might be difficult to collect from the scriptures of other organized cults. It is curious to reflect how many of our imperative taboos have no sanction in the religion upon which our civilization is sometimes supposed to be based.

The Queen of the Hindu Cinema World

'Come and applaud Miss T. P. Rajalachimi, Queen of the Hindu Cinema World, she of the silvern voice, she who will hold you spellbound by the charm of her melody. Come and admire the heroic exploits of Hanuman, the Monkey General.'

So proclaimed the handbills and the posters stuck on the walls of Siem-Réap's Assembly Hall.

You take your movies rather early in Cambodia. Those who wanted to miss nothing of Miss T. P. Rajalachimi's silvery tones and would not miss the *entrée en scène* of the Monkey General, were in their places by 6.15 a.m. sharp. It doesn't really matter if you are an hour or two late, for what you miss in the morning you can catch up with at the ten o'clock night show.

Even Hollywood and Mr. Rank have not given us screen versions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, though it would be rather fun to watch the Cyclops fumbling with his sheep and hear him roaring, 'Gee, that U-boy has sure got something.' And to see the siren Circe incarnated by Miss . . . well, you know who I mean. But the Indian movie-magnates, producers, directors and the like, plugged the Indian epics. 'Screen versions' of the *Ramayana* and of the *Mahabharata*, or of parts of those lengthy poems, have been put out in numbers.

But there is something rather sinister about these screen versions, especially in such a country as Cambodia, where the native redaction of them is part and parcel of the quasi-religious dance and sacred drama of the land. It is, perhaps, rather as though we had perpetuated Greek plays as a sacred ritual and, at the same time, were to show Americanized film-versions of Aeschylus or Sophocles. And, moreover, this truncated, bowdlerized, expurgated *Ramayana* of Miss T. P. Rajalachimi and supporters was prodigiously badly acted, childishly directed and smeared with the provinciality and the tawdriness of most modern Indian art.

Moreover, the dialogue was in Tamil. No one understands Tamil in Siem-Réap, and likewise, Tamil, the widest-spread of the southern Indian Dravidian languages, is a foreign tongue for the northern Indian epics, which should be chanted or read in an Aryan language. It is as though our movie-version of Aeschylus should be snorted in Arabic. All very strange.

The high, whitewashed walls of the Assembly Hall are adorned with glaring, brilliant, well-drawn pictures figuring the heroes of the Hindu epics in the style of those exquisite drawings the artists

of the Phnompenh school prepare for the school primers of little Cambodians. The images on the walls stood out against their dead-white background as did the medieval paintings of St. Christopher, the Last Judgment or the Virgin and Child on the walls of humble parish churches in Europe, hundreds of years ago.

These aerial, fantastic figures seemed to me a better interpretation of the Indian epics' spirit than the bungling, muffled, dull play of Miss T. P. R. and company.

The Indian Epics

Both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, in the form of their present-day redaction, show a general tendency indicating that they are connected with the legends and cults of the god Vishnu.

The outline of the *Ramayana*, which provides so many themes for the Cambodian dances, is something as follows. King Daçaratha, of the Solar Dynasty, feeling himself full of years, would have his son, Rama, recognized as his successor and crowned as king of Ayodhya, while the father would retire from court and live the life of a penitent in the jungle—a normal thing for a pious Hindu to do. Rama's wife is the lovely Sita, daughter of a neighbouring sovereign. His mother is Kauçalya. Mandra, the villainous nurse, who hates Rama, informs Kaikeyi, the King's youngest wife, of the royal intention. The King owes two wishes to Kaikeyi who begs him to crown Bharata, a brother of Rama. Kaikeyi induces the King to banish Rama for fourteen years. Rama, a most obedient son, hearing of his father's decision, bids farewell to the court and betakes himself off in company of Sita and his devoted brother Laksmana. Bharata refuses to take his brother's place and consents only to administer the kingdom as regent in Rama's name.

Sita, Rama and Laksmana live, for several years, an idyllic existence in the jungle and in friendly communion with holy hermits. The wanderers, however, are not seldom attacked by demons. At last, Ravana, the demon king, speeds a golden hind before the brothers. While they are off in its pursuit, Ravana abducts Sita and shuts her up in his fortress of Lanka beyond the seas.[1]

Rama enlists the aid of hordes of bears and monkeys (i.e., members of the aboriginal tribes of the south) of the forests and the monkey king, Hanuman, son of the wind, becomes Rama's faithful friend.

[1] Generally identified with the island of Ceylon.

It is Hanuman who discovers where Sita is held in captivity.

The bears and the monkeys throw a bridge across the sea and lay siege to Lanka. Ravana is killed. The monkey host burn all the island of Lanka and Sita returns. Followed by his victorious army, Rama goes back to Ayodhya and makes justice reign in his realm. . . .

Next to me was a family of Sino-Cambodians. The father, a fat merchant of the market-place, the pig-faced mother and the bright brats were all rapt in close attention. No shuffling, no getting up, no going out (except for me, I came and went several times, having sought refreshment at the New Siem-Réap Hotel bar)—you just do not get the *Ramayana* every day in Siem-Réap, nor do you hear the silver-voiced Tamil nightingale warbling her song. . . .

And yet . . . this wretched film was the dull image of a great poem which, with the *Mahabharata*,[1] has been, perhaps still is, an essential thing for the understanding of India. If we look at these epics far away from the Assembly Hall we shall see, amid a mass of verbiage, of digressions, and of what to us, must seem puerilities, many sparkling and eternal things . . . No single text is more illuminating of the Hindu religions than the *Bhagavad Gita* in the *Mahabharata*.

Consider.

We are on a battlefield just before the armies meet. Krishna himself conducts the chariot of Arjuna, the third of the Pandavas, who, though of warrior caste, raises objections to the slaughter of his fellow-men for ends of conquest or domination.

Krishna's reply is an attempt to conciliate the doctrine of the Absolute with necessities of social obligations. He says:

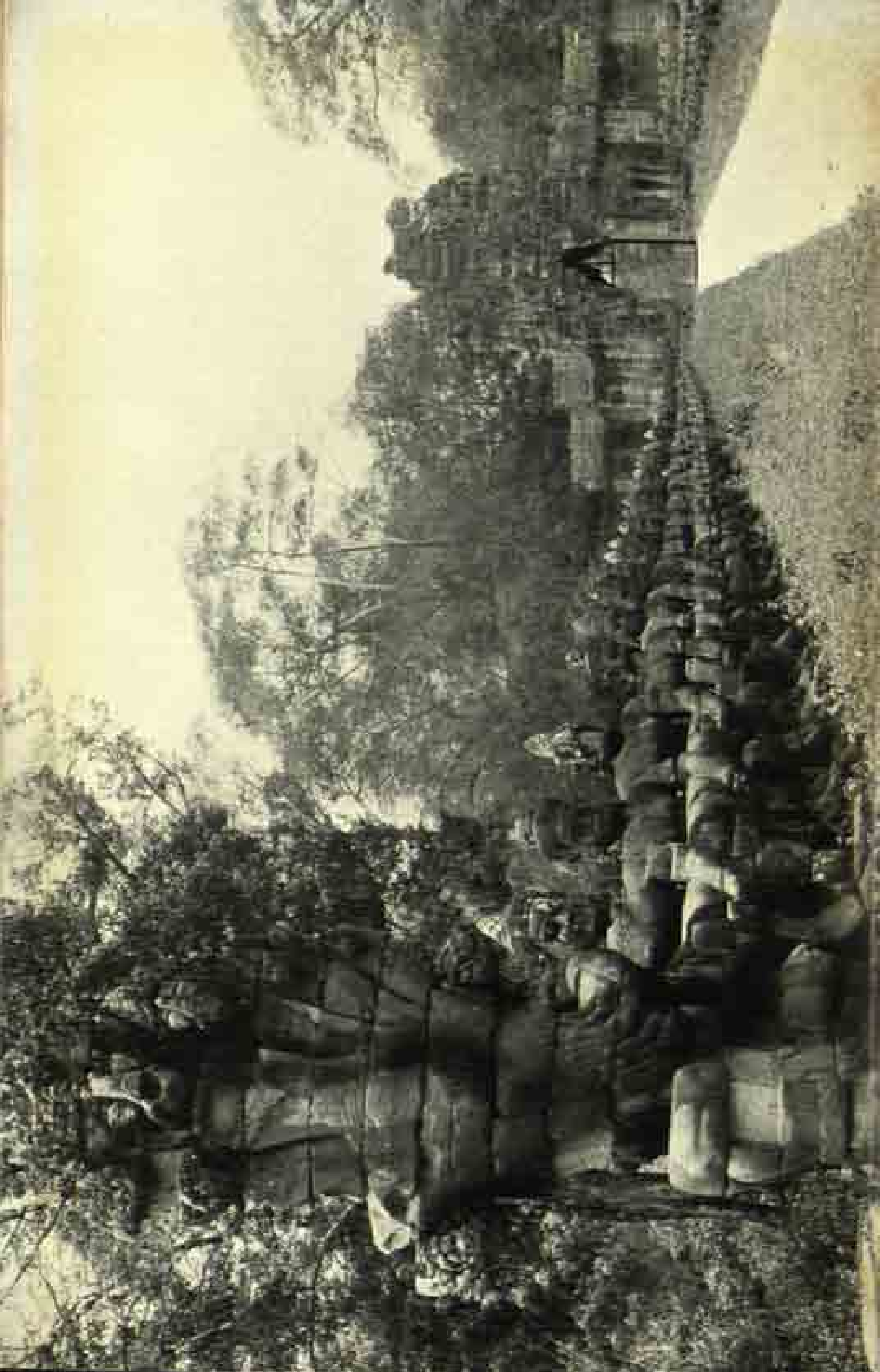
'This is a just war, pity alone should not deflect Arjuna from doing what is necessary . . . to believe that one man kills and that another is killed is to err . . . without beginning, without end, eternal, the Ancient is not struck when the body is struck.'

Arjuna asks whether meditation on the Absolute and abstention

[1] And none, despite its pronounced Vishnuite flavour, more popular in all Hinduist groups. The epic is, like the *Ramayana* woven of old ballads expanded so as to transcend the exploits of individuals. The Divine Hero is Krishna instead of Rama, and the main subject of the poem is the conflict dividing the Pandavas (that is the five sons of Pandu—Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva with their common spouse Draupadi—note the antique polyandrous trait) from their cousins the Kauravas, sons of Dhurtasastra. The Pandavas, succoured by Krishna, are victorious in the Great War of the Bharatas which gives its name to the very long text (215,000 lines). Besides the immortal Bhagavad Gita, the epic contains innumerable legends and romances together with moral and political treatises. A proverb has it that what cannot be found in the Mahabharata cannot be found in India.

School for Goddesses (*p.* 136)





from all action would not be an attitude superior to that of activity. Krishna replies that both methods, if rightly understood, lead to the same end. Who undertakes his work without weighing the result thereof, adds nothing to the burden of his mortality by the work undertaken. For him who has no longer hatred nor desire, a purely formal inaction has absolutely no moral value.

To carry out our vocation[1] must be the rule of our daily life. Without taking into account the personality of him who exercises it, we must not presume to decide that any given activity is, of necessity, superior to another.

Such detachment from the fruits of work

'Thou canst attain,' declares Krishna, 'by offering unto me thy work, whatever it may be. The untrodden path which must be followed by those who seek the Absolute is very arduous, but all those who invoke me, be they woman, merchant, slave, criminal, reach the supreme goal, and still more a Brahmin or an anchorite. I will save them all, presently, from the Ocean of Mortality.'

Who is Krishna?

'I am the Being in the heart of all men born, I am the beginning, the middle and the end. Among the gods, I am Vishnu, among the stars I am the Sun, I am Life and Death. This whole universe is strung upon me like a necklace of gems upon a thread. The ignorant see me hidden under the veil of multiplicity and think that I have come from the state of non-manifestation to that of manifestation. They know me only in my inferior manifestations, and they do not know me as I am, without beginning nor change. But those who seek spiritual freedom know that I am Brahman.'

In this splendid discourse, mingled of poetic flight, of spiritual insight, of mysticism and of words' imperative sway, we have, it may be, one of men's universal religious dictates.

As we regard the scriptures of Hinduism and of Buddhism we may also reflect that they are written in a language which for subtlety and richness of evocation has few rivals. In our world only Greek can offer so much and throw such dazzling realities by words into our souls.

Le pays est terriblement chaud et on ne saurait passer un jour sans se baigner plusieurs fois. La nuit même, on ne peut manquer de le faire

[1] *Dharma* (a concept both Brahmanistic and Buddhist) often translated as duty means rather what we feel ourselves urged to do by our whole being (i.e. 'vocation' in the religious sense) rather than a duty imposed upon us from without.

Angkor Thom: The Avenue of Victory at the Eastern Gate (*p.* 161)

une ou deux fois . . . Tous les trois, quatre, cinq ou six jours, les femmes de la ville, par groupes de trois, de cinq, vont se baigner hors de la ville, dans le fleuve. Arrivées au bord du fleuve, elles ôtent la pièce de toile qui entoure leur corps et entrent dans l'eau. C'est par milliers qu'elles sont ainsi réunies dans le fleuve. Même les femmes nobles s'y plaisent et n'en conçoivent aucune honte. Tous peuvent les voir de la tête aux pieds . . . Les Chinois, aux jours de loisir, s'offrent souvent la distraction d'y aller voir. . . .

CHOU TA-KWAN

The drone of the monks and the pipe of the pupils throb through the sticky, scented afternoon. The white, sandy roads bordering the Siem-Réap river are closed in by high palm-trees, huge blade-like banana leaves and every sort of flowering shrub. European-style villas are just discernible through the foliage. Large-eyed, grinning, naked children sprawl about and climb up and down the ladders leading to the front doors of the stilted huts which alternate with the more pretentious dwellings of the pink men or those who have adopted some of the pink men's ways.

The stream turns a score and more of water-wheels and the gurgling patter of the rills dies away into a low kiss as the freshets lose themselves in the vegetable gardens sown on the flood-soil along the river's dry-season low level.

A Japanese-looking, humped bridge of unpainted, dark, weathered timber spans the river to another monastery behind low white walls. the points of the shining stupas cut into the dark blue sky, the temple is in the Siamese taste[1] and the entrance gate is of wooden planks, open-work as a five-barred gate with us and painted white. The whole thing so strangely like a villa on the Riviera or even farther north, say with us, where houses and walls, and gates all white have a singular dream-like charm when our pale sun shines.

To the left of the bridge, and by the river's bank and overlooking the waters, is a *sala*[2] built, in part, upon piles driven down into the stream's bed. This *sala* has an elaborate roof with carved barge-boards reminding you of those of Indonesia, curling finials and undulating, spiky dragon-like eaves. Such rest-houses must represent a very ancient tradition in popular architecture. Their models owe

[1] Siem-Réap has no less than twelve temples and monasteries most of which (as is not remarkable in this province so long dominated by the Siamese) are almost indistinguishable from those of farther west in the land of the Thais.

[2] They are of all sizes from that of little booths perched high up out of reach of snakes and flood-waters and by the wayside, to that of the communal houses of the larger villages.

little to Indian influence. We may not go far wrong if we imagine that the houses, as distinguished from the temples and the palaces, of the ancient Khmers much resembled the *salas* of to-day or the pagodas or temples of modern Cambodian art which seem so strange beside the majestic masonry monuments of Angkor.

Cambodia is full of *salas* as becomes a people who spend not a little time in repose. *Salas* are public rest-houses, but they are houses for a very hot country. Just a roof, often elaborate and often as high as the rest of the building proper (though the height afforded by the stilts or piles supporting the floor, offsets any heaviness of proportion). The sides are open. Within, are benches of lattice. *Salas* are hotels, cafés, clubs, theatres, churches and shelters. They are open to every one. You are never without a roof in Cambodia.

The Chinese chronicler, Chou-ta-Kwan, with the typical prejudice of his people against frequent washing, wrote that:

'The people are often ill, owing to their too frequent baths and the incessant wasting of the heat.' But the Cambodians are as fond of washing as the Japanese, and all the population bathes and washes every day even if their houses tumble down.

Within the *sala* was a plump, matronly figure extended upon one of the lattice benches and half turned sideways in a massively elegant attitude familiar from the recumbent statues of the Buddha. She did not open her eyes at my appearance nor stir nor move. She was reposing. I sat down on the other side of the *sala*, near the water's edge, greedily sucking in the atmosphere of nonchalance, of peace, of plenty and of detachment. The water splashed and flashed and then came climbing up from the river a small boy of about three. In an instant he was dry. He sidled up with an engaging smile, felt my pockets, asked for pennies, tried to swallow my wrist-watch, then dived into the water and swam a bit. Then he counted up to five on his fingers. I gave him two coins. He put them in his pocket—his mouth.

His mother opened one eye lazily and then turned over.

She was swathed or clad in a shapeless sack-like garment, drawn rather low about her fine, fat breasts. These cotton stuffs the peasants wear are all woven at home, and dyed with vegetable dyes in dull shades of black, plum, indigo, olive and claret.

Todo este Reyno es muy poblado de gente, y toda ella comunmente es de mediana statura, de color baço, llana y senzilla, y de mejor corazon que los naturales de los otros Reynos.

As old Quiroga de San Antonio justly remarked the Cambodians are *de mejor corazon* than the peoples of surrounding countries or even, as he said, of any other kingdom. The Cambodian is generally a gentle being despite the quite bestial examples of cruelty set before him by his rulers in the past. He is good-natured except when goaded to desperation. If he often seems lazy, not very quick-witted (thank God for that! how tired one gets in wandering about the earth from meeting people who are quick-witted, and, of course, ignorant), and essentially careless not only of others' interests (that is but human) but also of his own (that is charming). He has many engaging qualities. He is gay and he is cheerful. He is friendly and, compared with any of his neighbours and with the foreigners dwelling in his midst, he is refreshingly frank and open. Then, his religion is the enemy of all effort and he lives in an eternal summer.

After all, the main object of life is to live.

Je vis, et je ne fais que vivre. Voilà une œuvre.[1]

You turn to the right from the *sala* and pass the *vihara* (monastery). In these old-fashioned parts an elephant-bus may still lumber past. Indeed, you cannot use the stinking bone-rattlers on these forest tracks . . . Here is an old man sitting perched upon his front ladder. He has a broad face with features you would see in Scotland, though he has Irish eyes and a large, long, full-lipped mouth. A fine, sharp nose and a general air of a Third Dynasty Egyptian wooden statue. His shock of upright, quite white hair is like enough to a wig. . . .

Then you get to the School for Goddesses.

Les habitants sont grossiers et très noirs. Il faut arriver jusqu' aux personnes du palais et aux femmes de maisons nobles pour en trouver beaucoup de blanches comme le jade, ce qui doit venir de ce qu'elles ne voient jamais les rayons du soleil. . . .' — CHOU TA-KWAN

During much of the Stone Age[2] in Indo-China at least four types of men seem to have lived in the peninsula. Three of them were, presumably, black- or, at least, dark-skinned. They were the Australoid (resembling the present-day Australian aborigines), the

[1] Valéry *Mon Faust*.

[2] Which, of course, cannot be compared chronologically with the Stone Ages of Europe. In the nineteenth century the Bahnar still polished their Stone Age tools.

Melanesoid (of the general type of the Melanesian islanders) and the Negrito. The fourth was probably a good deal lighter-skinned and may be identified with the Indonesoid types which still form the basis of the Indo-Chinese populations. And it survives in its least altered forms among the so-called savages of the mountain forests.

The Australoids have disappeared from Indo-China.[1] Negritos of quasi-Melanesoid type survive in the Andaman Islands and among the Semang of the Malay Peninsula, and traces of Negrito ancestry are sometimes noticeable even among the present-day Annamese. The slightly wavy, blue-black hair not uncommon among Annamese women, may be a Negrito legacy.

The Chinese chroniclers, on whom we must rely for the first written records of the Indo-Chinese peoples, describe the men they met when they annexed Tongking in the third century before our era, as 'black.' But the Chinese are as colour-conscious as a Kentucky colonel, and any brownish skin is apt to be dubbed 'black' by the Children of Han.

In any case, these 'Australoid,' 'Melanesoid' and Negrito types which we now associate with the islands of south-eastern Asia, most probably reached the archipelagos from the Indo-Chinese mainland. Beyond that we cannot go, but as far as the Indonesian type is concerned, there is a certain amount of evidence to suggest that it came from the north, that is from south-western China and, indeed, in comparatively recent times, possibly about 2000 B.C.

The Indonesoids of Indo-China probably imported with them a New Stone Age culture. From a social point of view it may be that they traced their descent through women. In any case women's position was important. Their cosmology comprised a dualism in which the mountain was opposed to the sea. In their animism, the cult of ancestors and the deities of the soil was prominent. Their sacred places were on the heights. Their dead were buried in jars or 'dolmens.' It may also be that they brought with them one or more isolating languages informed by a rich faculty of forming derivations by prefix, suffix and infix.

Caste

One of the most curious features of Indian civilization is that, although it spread over half the farther East, it did not carry with it the most characteristic social and religious oddity of India.

[1] But the Sakai of the Malay Peninsula are Australoids in the widest sense of the term and allied to the Veddoid peoples of Ceylon and southern India.

Caste was not exported.

The traditional story for the origin of the caste-system is that the institution was developed in order to mark a distinction between the fair-skinned 'Aryan' victors and the dark-skinned indigenous vanquished. If the famous 'Aryans,' about whose physical appearance we know nothing at all, and whose name designates only the speakers of a certain type of language, if these famous 'Aryans' were really fair-skinned 'Nordics' then they must have been relatively few in numbers since the inheritance of fairness has completely given way before the melanism of the dark-skinned peoples encountered in northern India. If there is any truth at all (and we have no means of judging) in the story as to the origin of the caste-system, then we should be inclined to think that caste-distinctions must have been introduced at a time when the physical visible difference between victor and vanquished was becoming effaced.

Men do not advertise the obvious. No 'white' man wears a button or decoration signifying that he is 'white.'

But no legend is more persistent than that of distinguished descent, since men all seek some reason for despising their fellow-men and for establishing an essential difference. The catch-words of this mythology are so embedded in our vocabulary that it is hard for most of us to reason reasonably on these matters. In those lands where a social system of 'nobility' has been maintained, not a few people speak as though they believed that when some rich rogue buys a title he changes at the same time the chromosomal inheritance of his children and their offspring.

Any individual—since hereditary factors are carried in the chromosomes—will show in his literary genealogy (and supposing that it relates a series of biological facts—and this is more than improbable) a number of fictitious ancestors who have transmitted to him no parcel of his being.

The organisation of Indian society into three *varna* (i.e., colours) with the 'non-Aryan' sudra devoted to their service, is set forth in the 'Code of Manu' and this digest, though it may embody older material, is in the form in which it has come down to us, hardly more ancient than the first years of our era.

It looks most probable, indeed, that the caste-system was evolved upon Indian soil and that it was not imported ready-made by the 'Aryan' invaders. Anything we should recognize as a caste-system would be most out of place among pastoral nomads and horse-

breeders such as the 'Aryans' seem to have been on their native steppes.[1]

Hutton has acutely suggested that the social grading exposed in the 'Code of Manu' had its origin in a clash between an invading patrilineal society and an established matrilineal one. And, undoubtedly, there are, throughout India, numerous traces of what must have been at one time very widely-spread matrilineal cultures.

It seems fairly certain that in the time of the Buddha there were only two 'castes,' that of the Brahmins and that of the rest of the people—a state of things which can be paralleled from other societies. And even if the caste-system, as we see it to-day, goes back to something fairly ancient, the modern extravagances must be held to be a comparatively late priestly invention elaborated after the successful counter reformation against Buddhism in the early Middle Ages, an invention designed to make priestly privilege secure against any more deadly assaults like that of Buddhism, and that by establishing a supernatural basis for the social organization of the Hindus.

None of the cultural colonies (which owed all their civilization to India) showed or show clear signs of this particularly degrading and hampering social servitude.

It is not, therefore, unreasonable to suppose that at the time when the countries of Farther India and Indonesia borrowed the customs, the religions, the manners, the costumes, the architecture, the art, and even to a certain extent, the languages of India, they did not borrow the institution of caste, for the simple reason that it did not then exist in anything like the form we know it to-day. During the period when Hinduist religions were the prevailing cult in Java, in Champa, in Cambodia and elsewhere, we find 'Brahmins' but no traces of other castes. So, we may take it that the simple division of Indian society into a sacerdotal class and a non-sacerdotal class prevailed in India itself until the seventh and eighth centuries of our era, if not later.

. . . this custom and order that in their kingdom no beautiful girl can be married unless he (i.e., the King) has seen her first. And, if she please him he taketh her to wife with the others . . . MARCO POLO

[1] The caste-system is a phenomenon concerning which ethnologists and 'social anthropologists' of all sorts and schools have let their fancy roam pretty freely and often with but little edification or enlightenment. Many of the theories concerning the origin of caste are vitiated by the not uncommon tendency of the 'social anthropologist' to compare phenomena widely separated in time.

School for Goddesses

Even in the humble dance troupes of the country, the ritual of instruction is much the same as in the royal courts, though the girls are not kept secluded.[1] Indeed, it may be that the old traditions of dancing were kept up by the local, strolling players. The ancient Royal Ballet of the Khmers seems to have disappeared by the sixteenth century. In the sixteen-hundreds, the ballet was re-introduced from Siam as quite a foreign thing. The chorus and choir sang in Siamese. Many, if not most of the dancers, were Siamese girls, some of whom played, in their way, an effaced, but fairly noticeable political role. In fact, until less than a hundred years ago, the Cambodian Ballet was the Siamese Ballet in Cambodia. It was Sisowath who restored the Cambodian dances.

The essential feature, the character of Cambodian ballet-dancing lies in the contrast between the static and the dynamic, So there are two sets of figures or movements—the slow and the rapid.

For months and months nothing is attempted but suppling-up and lengthening of the hands. The girls are not more than eight years old when they begin. Through sweat and hard labour, four years later the little dancer will know her stuff and be specialized in one of the four main roles of prince, princess, giant or monkey-warrior.

Before each day's lessons, should be held the ceremony of *sampeas krou* or salutation to teacher and spirits. Each girl brings with her five cigarettes, five rolls of chewing-betel, five beeswax candles, five incense sticks and a bowl containing water perfumed with beeswax smoke. In the water are thrown the three herbs known as *anchien*. According to her rank in the ballet school, each girl offers from one to five flowers of the egg-plant. They ensure success, freshness and beauty. Moreover, the genius of the dance prefers the flowers to all others.[1]

At Siem-Réap, the girls studying each role are grouped together on mats decorated with large lozenge-shaped designs. There is neither song nor music. The ballet mistress executes each figure herself, and then she sits down, holding in her hand a cane some three or four feet long with which she can, without often getting up, both beat time and the girls.

[1]The Cambodians call the aubergine or egg-plant *trap kha*. All the ceremonies noted above are not, of course, performed by each local troupe, but some features are always retained. A needle is also often presented by the girls in order to symbolize the acuteness necessary to pierce the mysteries of their art.

The essentials of the slow movement take, on an average, about three months to learn and those of the quick movements about a month less.

The ballet mistress, lean, withered, old, but with an astonishing elegance of line and deportment, jumps up and gets to work on the wretched girls. 'You're not bending enough . . .' 'I'll teach you, three times to-day I've told you to lift your arms as high as your eyebrows . . .' slap on the face . . . prod with the stick. 'And don't think you'll get off so lightly next time, I'll shove my fingers into your haunches just where it hurts most . . .' 'And don't forget when the rehearsal's finished there's the washing-up to be done, the floors to be swept and dinner to be cooked.'

And they give a sort of tariff of effort.

A girl, quick to learn, may pick up the 'Cadence of Farewell' in three days, the 'Cadence of Entry and Departure' in eight days, the 'Flutter of Birds' in ten days, the 'Cadence of Princes and Divinities' in about a month, the *kbach chhoet chhung* or 'Cadence for Combats and the Airy March of Princes' in not less than three months, whereas the specific cadence proper for Prince Nexos is so highly complicated (owing to the handling of the magic wand) that no girl can learn it in less than six months.

The Cambodians themselves divide their kind into two classes—'ox' and 'deer.' The massive, heavy, peasant type and that which is lithe, slender and graceful. The contrast between the two sorts shows most clearly among the women (as in most communities) many of whom are thick-built, with broad shoulders, thick ankles, and from early youth, a tendency to put on flesh. On the other hand, the dancers, the girls of the 'deer' sort, retain, even when old, much grace.

The pale, slim Siamese ballet dancers were, for generations, imported into Cambodia and their descendants form the bulk of the royal ballet to this day.

'Where is balm for the wounded heart?

With the very gentle, very poor and Buddhist people of Cambodia.'

MAKHALI PHAL

The nearest thing in India to the Cambodian ballet is probably the *Kathakali* dance-drama of Malabar, taken together with such sacred dances as the *Alarippu* which is posed by the *devadasis* or temple harlots of southern India.

But Cambodian comment on the postured drama avoids those absurd and tiresome phrases we meet with too often in books about things Indian. 'Peeping at Krishna' . . . 'The Ocean of Mundanity is thigh-deep to Vishnu Devotees' . . . and the like, with, moreover, each Indian proper-name bristling with the most formidable apparatus of diacritical marks . . . there is a whole set of dance-fans and Indomaniacs in the West who seem to find some sort of refuge in a vocabulary even more sententious, pretentious and hollow than that the Indians themselves use, either when they try to write English, or in their own vernaculars, not one of which, of course, has the precision or beauty of the classical tongues of Ind.

Rather earnest young women you may meet in New York basements who will tell you all about the Twenty-Four Root Mudras or Poses; the *Utpallapadmaka*, or White Lotus; the *Hamsaya* or Swan Face (it is, alas, for romance, rather the 'Goose Face'!); and the jumbled categories of 'meanings'; and the 'rhythmic movements of the neck'; and the 'fundamental head movements'; and the 'expression of the eyebrows'; and the 'eight fundamental movements of the eye,' including the *brahmara* or the 'moving of the eye in a gyrating motion in order to indicate passions'—the 'glad eye' in fact. . . .

But the few Europeans who have tried to translate from Cambodian or to compose verse, in what is intended to be the Cambodian mode, do land us with this sort of thing:

On the traces of Neang Kangrey, of Fa Ngom, the Conqueror,
To Muong Soua, Capital of Phra Bang. . . . etc.

Verse, or prose, sprawling and faltering with proper names and with foreign words, is, perhaps, of all literary exercises the most fatiguing . . . this sort of thing is tiresome when Milton is the author:

'Is it Mira Bai, Queen of Chithor
Or the Divine Savitri?
Is it Prana the Sovereign
Spouse of Rajendravarman. . . .'

As though anyone cared.

Khvao

From Siem-Réap you can drive through the forest to Khvao, fifty miles along the old Khmer tracks past the ruins of Beng-Méalea and Prahkhan, which are among the most significant in Cam-

bodia. Nothing adds more to the strangeness and the majesty of Angkor than an exploration of the wild jungle surrounding it.[1]

If the region around Great Lake is cultivated and peopled, bearing three-quarters of the Cambodian population, this zone is, with all its curiosities, almost commonplace compared with the northern forest which, as you push through it, reveals from time to time stupendous monuments.

And all the province of Siem-Réap hides patches of primitive peoples not yet converted to the Little Vehicle and still cherishing their ancient fears and hopes and their antique customs. It is among them you may sometimes be illuminated by flashes of comprehension. The Indian survivals, the Buddhist rites, the solid civilisation will all seem but fringes and tassels sewn on to a body of animism. The old ways are in men's bones, the new ones are in their brains.[2]

You cannot use the Khvao track in the rainy season, but during dry weather the sandy road is excellent, and even if you do break a spring-blade or two by lurching into a sandpit, you can keep up a good speed of thirty to thirty-five miles an hour.

The virgin forest clutches Khvao.

A forest full of elephant, of wild buffalo, of gaur, panther and tiger with, moreover, they say, still some rhinoceros, though none have been killed for years past. You will not see much of these beasts—elephant spoor and, it maybe, eyes at night. No more. The wild creatures stay in the wilds unless pressed by famine, fire or flood.[3]

The gaur likes the hills but you may also find him on the plains where there are plenty of trees and high grass. His hide is almost impervious to most bullets at any but very close range and, although the beast's ferocity has been exaggerated, since he is rarely killed at a

[1] Some of the finest Khmer ruins are almost unknown because still buried in the jungle and inaccessible except in the dry season. Of these are Sambor (*see* p. 80), Beng Méalea and Prahkhan (*see* above), Kohker, Banteay-Chhmar (*see* p. 203), and Prah-Vihear.

[2] Even in the villages where there are temples, monasteries and monks, the popular festivals show a strange mingling of antique rites and Buddhist ritual.

[3] The *gaur* (often called by the English *sladang*—the Malay name) is the largest extant member of the ox tribe. Young beasts are an olive drab while the old males show almost black. The very sharp, but not large, horns are yellowish with black tips, and the skin has a characteristically oily appearance, and the coat is short-haired. The *gaur* has a hump and his rump slopes downwards a little. The *banting* is a smaller animal than the *gaur* but also a fine beast. The young bulls and the cows have a thick black line along the backbone. The horns are more curved and the hump less pronounced than those of the *gaur*. The wild buffalo is rather larger than the domestic animal which it much resembles. The wild sort is still plentiful in southern Annam and in Cambodia although it has been decimated by the rinderpest.

first shot, you must either let him go or be most careful in tracking, for he will charge at terrific force.

There are, or were, two sorts of rhinoceros in Indo-China—the Sunda (with only one horn on the male—the female is hornless) and the Sumatran, much smaller and with two horns, and rather hairy. The great Indian rhinoceros does not exist in Indo-China. The rhinoceros lurks in the thickest jungle and always near marshy ground. Tapir tracks are often taken by amateurs for those of young rhinoceros, but it is easy to tell the difference, for the tapir has only three toes on his fore-legs—but, of course, if you only glimpse the imprints of the hind-legs you may imagine that you are hot on the trail of a young rhinoceros leading up to the family hide-out.

But, to-day, tapirs are perhaps even rarer in Indo-China than are rhinoceros, or at least the former are more wary since only two have been reported as shot within the last thirty years, but then, not all travellers tell tales.

And this forest around Khvao flashes with birds. Peacocks, and the blue pheasant which never leaves the jungle,[1] wild cock, pigeon, partridge, quail, wild duck—of more sober colour.

From Siem-Réap to Kosder, the track is rather bumpy and the going not so good as in the Khvao direction. The seventy miles will take you three hours or more, but the post is as good a centre for hunting trips as is Khvao, while the jungle around Kosder is dotted with crumbling brick *prasat* (Khmer sanctuaries), tree-encircled and still blackened from the flames lit by the Siamese invaders when, time and again, they ravaged this borderland in the past.

But nearer to Siem-Reap are the Kulen hills.

Kulen

About thirty miles as the crow flies, but somewhat more by the jungle-tracks, rises a plateau covered with thick forest and sparkling with waterfalls. It is the Kulen Hills from which trickle down several of the streams feeding the Great Lake and watering the jungle.

On this plateau King Jayavarman II, at the end of the eighth century, constructed a number of tower-sanctuaries. Of these, six only were known in 1936. They seemed, at first glance, of rather different styles, but a closer examination showed that they were all conceived and executed in a style intermediate between that

[1] As far as Indo-China is concerned, the golden pheasant is found only in Tongking and especially towards the Chinese frontier. I have flushed coveys of them in the high-grass country between Trungkhanh-phu and the frontiers of Kwang-hai. The silver pheasant is rare in Annam. Indo-China is a home of the pheasant family.

characteristic of eighth century Khmer architecture and the style which prevailed at the end of the ninth. Here lay the capital so vaunted in the inscriptions of Jayavarman II, the refounder of his country's greatness.[1]

In 1936 a campaign of excavation was undertaken at Kulen.[2] In the short space of five or six weeks, seventeen new tower-sanctuaries (in ruins), sixteen carved lintels, sixteen pairs of little columns, four statues, stone lions, staircases and several sculptured slabs were unearthed. These discoveries revealed a new style of Khmer art combining archaic traits and obvious foreign traditions with new inventions and decorative motifs devised by the Khmers themselves in their own land and on their own soil. As soon as they began to trust themselves to strike out for themselves in sculpture and in architecture, the Khmers began to show what were to become permanent features of their art—richness of decoration, multiplication of forms, and what the French call *l'horreur du vide*, the horror of empty spaces, but the whole kept in an equilibrium by clearly defined frameworks and boundary lines.

The Phnom Kulen style, as now revealed, links the styles of the eighth century's end to those of the second part of the ninth century.[3]

There are so many ancient monuments in Cambodia because each successive monarch built at least one. If that of his predecessor was finished at his death, well and good. If it was not finished, then, often, it was left, as were the temple-tombs of Egypt, uncompleted, while the efforts of the people were forced towards the construction of the reigning monarch's shrine.

> 'Whether alone, or in thy harlot's lap
> When thou would'st take an early morning's nap
> Up! up! says Avarice. . . .'
>
> DRYDEN

[1] The essential feature of the Khmer temple is the tower-sanctuary or *prasat*. In the oldest styles (vide p. 73) it was built of brick with stone revetments (seventh to end of ninth centuries) later the temples were constructed entirely of masonry (generally sandstone, limestone or laterite) from tenth century onwards to the end. The *prasat*, at first isolated, were, rather soon, grouped symmetrically on a common platform. They were raised on temple-mounds or built on step-pyramids and linked with each other by concentric and cruciform galleries. Great Angkor Vat is nothing but the sublime development of this arrangement.

[2] The expedition was led by M. Philippe Stern (now Director of the *Musée Guimet* in Paris,) and M. Henri Marchal, under the auspices of the *Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*.

[3] A seventh-century lintel will show the certain influence of Indian wood-carved models. The eighth century style of, say Prei Khmeng is more clearly Khmer. Then after a period of decline and poverty, comes the style of Kulen (beginning of ninth century) displaying mingled Javanese influence, archaic reminiscences and new inventions.

We have now the complete list of the sovereigns who ruled from Angkor, beginning in the ninth and ending in the gloom of the fourteenth century. For nearly all of these monarchs we know the dates of accession and of death and, moreover, the relationship each king bore to his predecessor. From the Khmer inscriptions we can attribute the construction of such and such a monument to such and such a sovereign. Moreover, the Chinese annals and the inscriptions of the Khmers' old enemies, the Chams, tell us something, at least, of the Cambodian kings' activities.

Therefore, in its main lines, Khmer history is clear for a period of nearly five hundred years. But much remains dark and obscure. Origins. Decline and Fall . . . and a comprehensive explanation of the 'Khmer miracle.'

Two different legends agree in attributing the foundation of the Khmer realm to the union of an Indian prince with a native princess, heiress of a 'Lunar' dynasty.

According to the first fable, or metaphor, or allegory, a foreigner, a Brahmin, dreams that the God has given him a bow and has bade him set sail for overseas. On the morning after his vision, the 'foreigner' discovers the divine bow at the foot of a tree—another sacred tree.

He sets sail and makes a landfall in a country governed by a young queen—note the matriarchal touch—who would resist him. Kaundinya, for such is the foreigner's name, draws his bow and aims an arrow which pierces the side of a ship and strikes a man dead. New weapons. Secret weapons. The queen is won over. She becomes Kaundinya's bride. He is said to have given her the name of Soma[1] and have taught her to wear clothes, since she and her subjects before Kaundinya's advent, went naked. From this couple descended the kings of the Khmers.

The other tale has it that the stranger was no Brahmin but a prince, exiled by his father, and escaped to the delta where was to be the future realm of Kambuja. The prince drives out the hated Chams and seizes their kingdom, but, when he is overtaken on a sandbank by the tide, he meets the marvellously beautiful daughter of the Naga (or serpent) King. The pair fall in love. The Naga King enlarges his son-in-law's dominions by drinking up the waters. Then,

[1] 'Soma' (that is Sanskrit for 'pressed juice') is the nectar of the Indian gods, but in post-Vedic literature *soma* is the regular name for the moon conceived as being drunk up by the gods (and so waning) until filled up again by the sun. And Kaundinya's bride was a princess of a Lunar dynasty.

the complaisant father-in-law builds, for his children, a splendid capital city.

These stories may hold some echo of history. Certain it is that the serpent-cult is an ancient thing in Indo-China, that, in some way, snakes were the totem of the ancient Khmers and that the spark which lighted the Khmer blaze of glory was struck from a clash between Indian civilization and a native culture on Cambodian soil.

So, we can see this far into the dim origins of the Khmer 'miracle'—it was induced, as were all those of which we have notice, by the contact, possibly the violent contact, of two contrasting ways of life, ways of thought and ways of living.

And, we have seen that, all through the five hundred years of Khmer empire, the ruling monarch must, figuratively at least, lie with a serpent, that is a woman of serpent-totem, and so by re-performing as a rite, the mystical copulation to which his people owed their fortunes and himself and his predecessors their glory, the sovereign lord secured the continued prosperity of his realm. The rituals must be kept up. If they fail, dire ills assail the State.

King Içanavarman I (617-627) fixed his capital at Sambor Prei Kuk, which we visited about twenty miles north-north-east of Kompong Thom. His dominions seem to have included much territory now in Siam. Two years after the king's death was set up the first dated Khmer inscription which has come to light. At this time the religion of the land—or of its reigning dynasty—was the cult of Harihara (Vishnu and Shiva as one God). There are no traces of any sort of Buddhism which, we may remember, in the seventh century was almost extinct in India, the land of its origin.

In the middle of this same century, the great realm consolidated, if not created, by Içanavarman I, split, like Egypt, into two parts, into an upper and a lower land. There is an almost complete lack of inscribed monuments for the eighth century of Cambodia. The Chinese chroniclers tell of a 'Water Chenla' and an 'Earth Chenla' Chenla was then, and still is, the classical Chinese name for Cambodia. The country was, it would seem, subject to frequent attacks by pirates and invaders from Sumatra and Java. We learn from Arabic writings (for the Moslems were already beginning to spread in the islands of Indonesia) that in the eighth century, the King of Kambuja was killed, no doubt in battle, by the Maharaja of Jawaga. We may, also, be sure that during this period of civil strife and of confusion, new artistic traditions and new religious, political and moral notions were imported into Kambuja.

After a century or more of anarchy, during much of which time Cambodia was more or less tributary to the rulers of Java, the Cambodian realm was reunited by a great statesman and lucky fellow who ruled as Jayavarman II (802-834).

No inscriptions have, as yet, been found which may be attributed to Jayavarman II, but there is a *stela* (dating from the middle of the eleventh century) in the Bangkok Museum, and from this monument we can piece together the main events of the reign. Jayavarman was undoubtedly a 'usurper.' The phrase on the *stela* reads:

'For the prosperity of the people, in that perfectly pure race of Gods, a great lotus which had no stem, he arose like a new blossom.'

That is to say, he was like Melchizedek. And the new king is reported to have come 'from Java.' This may be taken to mean from any of the territories under the sway of the Hinduized realm of Çrivijaya which included parts of Java and Sumatra as well as regions of the Malay Peninsula. It would appear that it was at 'Indrapura' (his new city, now Thbong Khmum, east of Kompong Cham) that the sovereign took into his service a young Brahmin called Çivakaivalya, who was to become the high-priest of the new God-King cult.

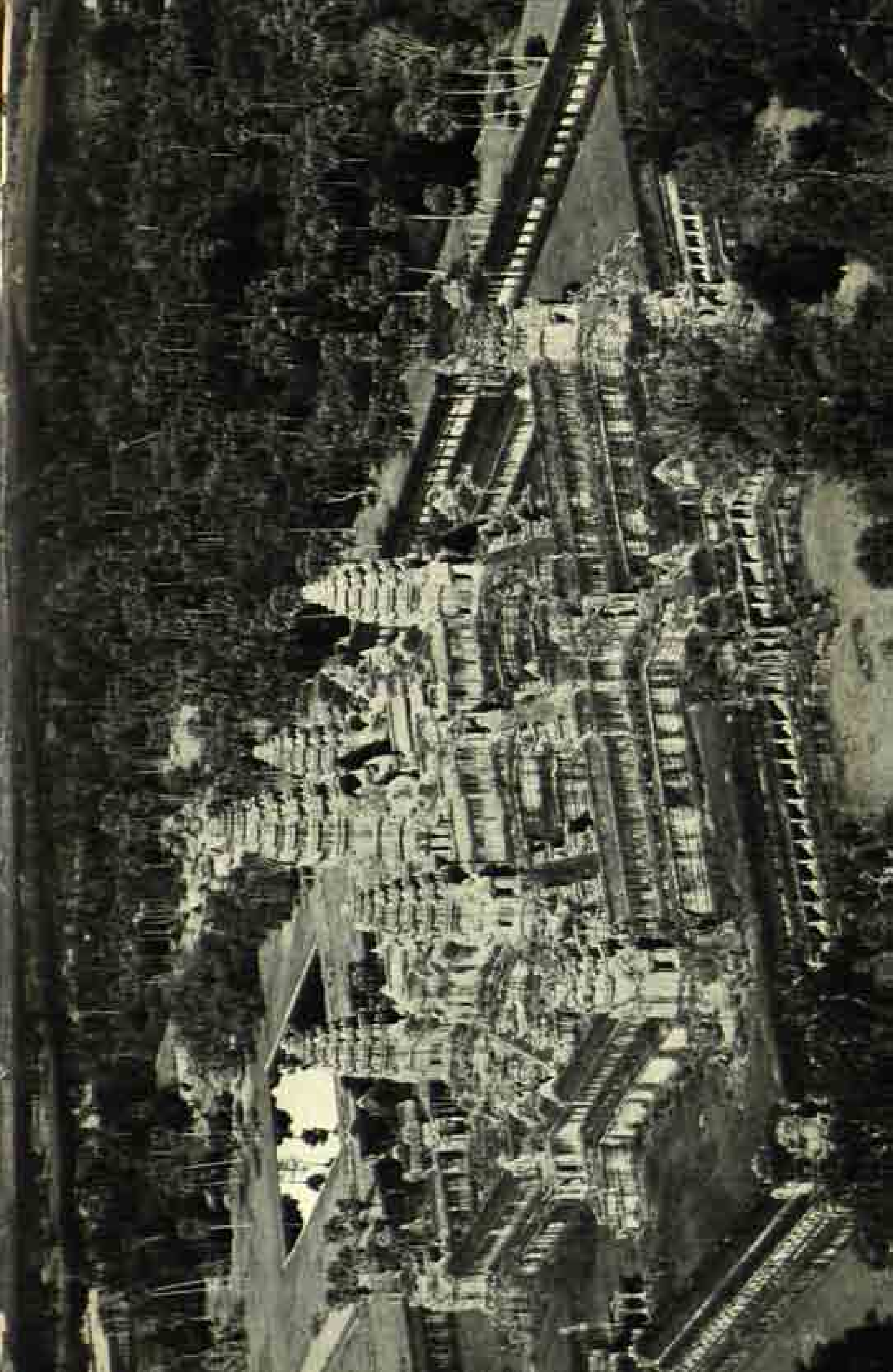
And this Brahmin devised an effective ritual whereby Cambodia was, spiritually, and therefore physically, relieved from its dependence upon Java. That is to say, Jayavarman had the Church on his side and his usurpation was consecrated as a restoration just as the patriot-traitor Adalberon, Archbishop of Rheims, made Hugues Capet's claim and title firm.

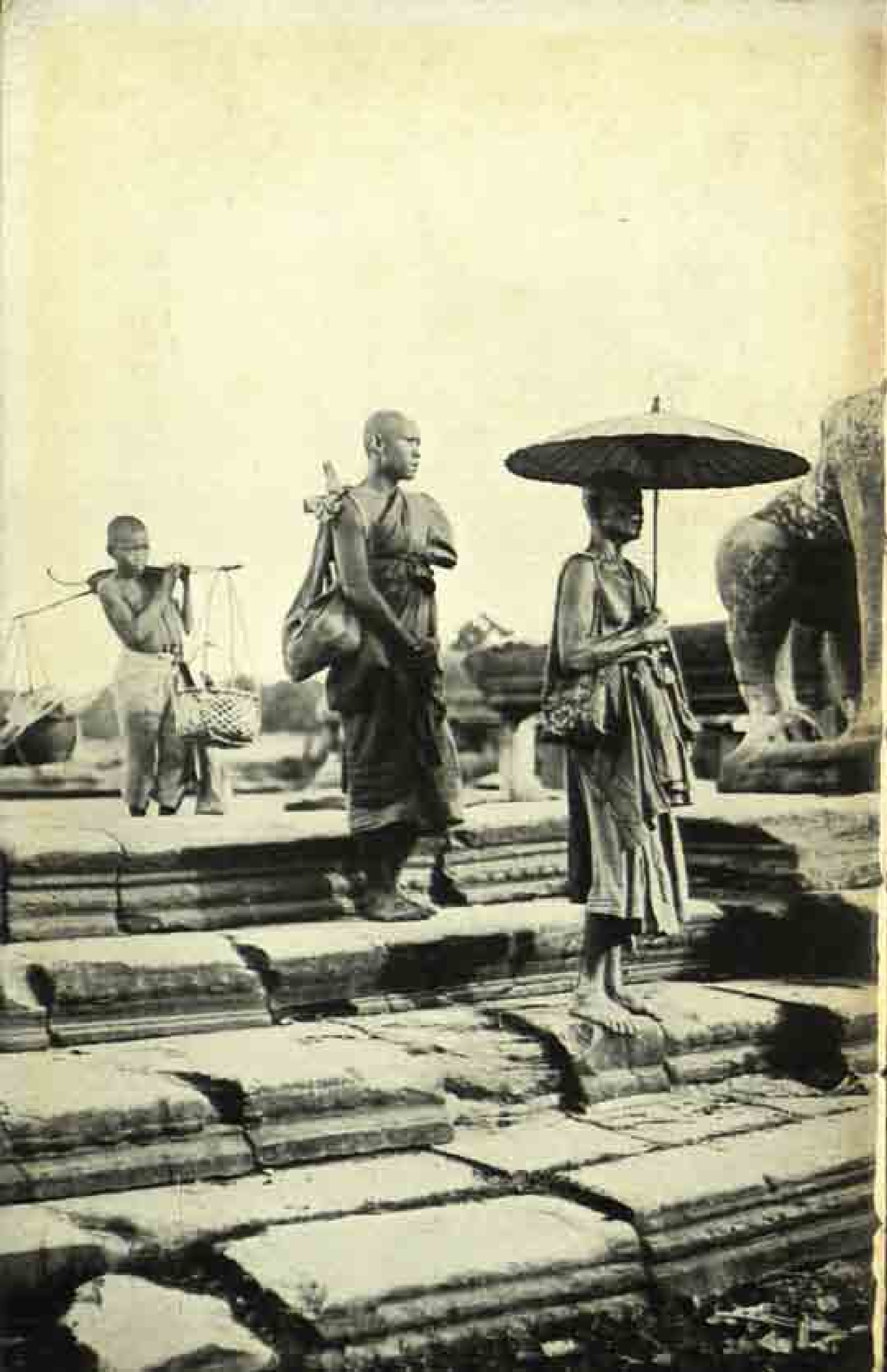
Jayavarman was 'legitimate.'

He gave out, of course, that he was directly descended from the ancient rulers of the land. And who will question the title of a conqueror?

Jayavarman it was who fixed eventually his capital upon the Kulen Heights and his city he called Mahendraparvata. It may be that it was more in the nature of a citadel and sanctuary than a regular metropolis. A stronghold for time of trouble. Jayavarman's other, and perhaps, more used residence and court, was at Hariharalaya, near the present-day village of Roluos where we saw some ruins on our way to Siem-Réap. But most of the existing Roluos monuments date from the time of Indravarman I some fifty years later than that of Jayavarman, and there seems no doubt that, in its formative period, the Roluos architectural tradition owed much to Javanese influences, so that perhaps we may consider that the change

Angkor Vat from the Air





brought about in Khmer art under Jayavarman was due in some measure to importations from Java.

It was Jayavarman II who established the cult of the *deva-raja*, or god-king. For this new worship, dynastic temples, or temple-mountains, must be made (since the cult was celebrated in high places), crowned with a sanctuary in which was placed the *linga* or phallus of Shiva and this sacred stone and baetylic monument was regarded as the King's 'personality' or sacred soul with whose welfare was bound up that of the King's earthly body and so the prosperity of his realm.

It is important for the understanding of the later Khmer buildings to remember that, under the varied robes of Great Vehicle Buddhism, of Shivaite or of Vishnuite Hinduism, we may detect, for four hundred years and more, the constant urge of the Khmer kings to raise huge monuments for the conservation and preservation of their 'soul-matter.' These great wondrous fanes and temples were not only gorgeous homage to the Gods, but they were essential departments of state. Hence, for every king his temple-mountain.

Although the Phnom Kulen temples of Jayavarman are still in type (and in their brick construction) similar to the seventh century towers, the little columns, the lintels, the pediments of carved sandstone which adorn the Kulen shrines, and particularly the sandstone images they sheltered, already belong to the 'classical' period of Khmer art. Jayavarman brought in something new, a new technique, that of sculptured stone buildings, but he also brought in a new necessity, that of temple-mountains which, at first, were achieved by grouping together the old brick *prasats* or towers on to a common platform so that they might form a pyramid. From these pyramids developed the great masses of Angkor Vat and Banteai Chhmar.

And, perhaps here, we have an answer to the question we put some way back. Why did not the old Cham rulers, commanders of cunning sculptors and architects, order and achieve anything so magnificent as the immense temples of the Khmers? The Chams did not need temple-mountains for the shelter of sacred phalli. They had no *deva-raja*. So does the god command the house.

Kulen art has its complement at Roluos whose main monument, the stepped pyramid of Bakong, was the temple-mountain (of a royal city antedating Angkor) for the cult of the god-king.

Buddhist Monks at Angkor Vat (*p.* 181)

Maya and Khmer

So, here is the evolution of the Khmer sanctuary from humble brick tower to the spacious majesty of Angkor Vat.

The tower-sanctuary sheltering the Divine Statue within which was embodied the *subtle person* of sovereign or prince, is first of all isolated. Then the towers are grouped upon a common pedestal or platform. Then the platform develops into a stepped pyramid or temple-mountain symbolizing upon this earth the celestial mountain abode of the gods. No doubt the setting grew with the enrichment of cult, creed and ritual. Then the tower-sanctuaries are placed on the tops of pyramids and the shrines are joined up with galleries, vestibules and porticoes and marked with corner-chambers and still other towers. The complicated and impressive complex of the classical Khmer temple was achieved.[1]

Now, it is hardly possible to write about ancient Cambodia without being led into some discussion of the theories which have been put forward, from time to time, as to a relationship between the works of the ancient Khmers and the monuments of the ancient Maya. We may start off with a valid comparison. Both the present-day Cambodians and the descendants of the Maya in Central America are ignorant of their past and would be quite incapable of repeating what their ancestors did. And we might ramble off into a philosophic discussion as to the cause of the decline and fall of the Khmer and/or Maya empires, and produce any sort of explanation and explanations —parasites, epidemics, change of climate, lack of water (or too much of it), foreign wars or what you will. But we should not be much farther along the road towards discovery of any common origins of Khmer and Maya art and architecture.

The hypothesis is often presented as an established and proven fact that Mayan art, architecture (and therefore civilization in general) were derived from, or at least profoundly influenced by, Cambodian or Khmer models. This is a favourite theme of the now sadly faded band of 'diffusionists' or enthusiastic men who would derive all civilization from that of dynastic Egypt. The archæological evidence is against such a theory and it would be hardly worth mentioning were it not that the diffusionists did manage to put across one piece of diffusionism. That of the Cambodian origin of Mayan art.

[1] The galleries were first vaulted with wooden beams, then with bricks and finally with corbelled masonry. Long after they had mastered the art of great stone buildings the Khmers, owing to their ignorance of the arch, were embarrassed when it came to covering long corridors.

It is true that in Central America we are often reminded of Indonesian and perhaps less often of Indo-Chinese monuments. The 'monolithic animal' (i.e. boulder carved in relief) of, say, Quiriguá does recall such things as the 'Elephant and Warrior' monolith from Batugadjah.[1] But is it not rather shape and material more than technique and workmanship which strike us?

Again, the stone steps at Hilifalawu in the southern part of the island of Nias,[2] do look rather like the staircase at Copan in Honduras, while the step pyramid (with median slit of steep stone steps) of Tjandi Sukuh in the Lawu mountain region of Java, undoubtedly presents some superficial likeness to the teocalli of Labaantun in Central America.

But such parallels as I have cited are, it will be noted, all between Mayan monuments and those of Indonesia, and not of Indo-China. As far as we can see at the present time, the theory of Mayan borrowings from Cambodia is completely ruled out by chronology.

The Mayan monuments bearing the earliest inscribed dates (which, of course, we can only interpret with absolute certainty relatively) may be assigned either to the year 94 B.C. or, if we prefer the shorter chronology associated with the name of Professor Morley, to the year 176 A.D.[3]

Uaxactun is, as far as we know, the earliest Maya site. The monuments there are in a definitely Mayan style which, with some modification, was to be that of all subsequent Mayan art, and they were set up before Indian influences had induced in south-eastern Indo-China, the art of Funan, much less that of the Khmers.

In fact there is a time-lag between the earliest Mayan and the earliest Funan art. It may be the diffusionists would just switch their theory round backwards and tell us that Funan and Khmer art were derived from that of the Maya?

For the present, at least, we may take it that when the Maya were putting up the monuments of Copan, Tikal and Menché, the peoples of the Mekong estuary were living in the Samrongsen stage of a mixed Bronze and New Stone culture.

Of course, the last word has not been, by any means, said concerning the art-motifs and cultural influences which may be common

[1] Quiriguá in Guatemala and Batugadjah at Pasemah in southern Sumatra.
[2] Off the southern shore of Sumatra.
[3] Stela B at Copan is the principal exhibit of the 'diffusionists.' It was on this stela (or rather on photographs and drawings of it—since he never visited Central America)—that the late Elliot Smith was fain to recognize an elephant's head. The highly stylized sculpture might just as well be that of a toucan's, of a tapir's, of a *makara's* or of the head of any other beast, real, imaginary or mythical.

to the circum-Pacific area. There are such things as the 'split animal' (or t'ao-t'ie) *motif* common to early China (e.g. in Chou dynasty times) and to the north-west American coast Indians of to-day.

Magic patterns and magic motifs and magic images travelled far and wide. In western Europe there existed, from the close of the Old Stone Age, an abstract and ornamental form of art which, for thousands of years, sought no imitation of nature. The main features of this art were a combination of decorative patterns (sometimes in association with fantastic animals) with conventional representations of the human figure. This was the art of the nameless peoples who, in the Bronze Age, occupied northern Europe. During the Iron Age we find the same kind of art used by Celts and Germans.

Everyone must be struck by the resemblances between 'Celtic' patterns of early Irish and Scandinavian art and those of the Indonesian woodcarving of, for instance, Borneo.

This decorative art of New Stone, Bronze and Iron Age Europe shows, in all its phases, resemblances with the art of early China. During the Second Iron Age this decorative art is in close contact with the arts of the south Russian Scythians and through them with the hieratic arts of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Persia.

Art streams flow wide and far. But they take time and it is hard to see how one could have flowed from southern Indo-China, across the Pacific to Central America, before it had, so to speak, sprung from the earth.

Esta el Reyno de Camboxa en la banda del norte dentro del Tropico de Cancro en onze y doze grados apartado de la Equinocial, es muy grande, tiene una sola sierra de donde baxan muchos Rios, lo demas es tierra baxa, y en razon de esto se anega grande parte suya casi por espacio de tres meses. El rio principal es Meccon.

QUIROGA DE SAN ANTONIO

The Great Lake

To get to the Tonlé-Sap from Siem-Réap you must drop down the river at flood-times or follow its shores when the drought of winter has drained it to a trickle. The vale of the Siem-Réap is unique in Cambodia and shows a richness, an exuberance and a softness which, as Marchal wrote years ago, makes it rival the most lovely valleys of Ceylon.

It is best, first of all, to wander along the stream's banks, through

the bamboo brakes and friendly, clean-smelling trees as far as the height of Phnom-Krom from whose summit you can see far and wide over the Tonlé-Sap. If you face northwards, there stretches the endless forest enclosing the monuments and herds of elephant. Shimmering, like a mass of quick-silver in the clear heat, is the Grand Baray, or Great Pool, in whose cool waters, near Angkor Thom, you may bathe to wash off the fatigue of your amazement, though not your wonder.

The 'flooded forest' ringing round the Great Lake, is a very different land from the dense jungle to the north. The fishermen of the Tonlé-Sap are a more lively and prosperous folk than the poor tillers who eke out a scanty living from the forest clearings.

The banks of the lake are dotted with the floating villages of raft- and pile-dwellings, where live the Cambodians and many Annamese who have been for generations fishers in the Great Lake. The men of these floating hamlets follow a peculiar way of life. Whether they be humble fishers toiling for themselves and their families, or whether they be the servants of rich bosses (often Chinese) who employ hundreds of coolies and pay large sums for the fishing rights, all the dwellers by the lake are hard at work—it seems all day and all night—and they work in the most methodical and standardized fashion.[1]

The coolies are divided into gangs. Each gang does only one sort of job. And each man in the gang does only one specific job. One man washes the fish. Another cuts off the heads. A third rips open the catch. A fourth coolie guts the fish, while a fifth man salts them.

These fellows are experts. Mass production. Chain manufacture.

Squatting on their haunches, the workmen perform their movements with almost automatic precision. The swarms of great, buzzing horse-flies, the stink, the heat, the monotony, appear to tell on these men not at all. This is good business. Here is the easiest fishing in the world. When the flood waters slip and slither inwards towards the lake itself, the fish drop down from the forest aquarium into the rattan traps. They jump and flap and flounder and smack against the slats and you can fill a whole sampan with them in half an hour.

And, seated on the top of a pair of steps, the Chinese comprador fans himself, for all the world like a lawn tennis referee. But the cunning eye of 'uncle' roves ceaselessly around while he checks up

[1] The fishing season attracts a population of about 30,000 foreigners. Annamese, Malays, Siamese and Chinese. Not less than 100,000 tons of fish are drawn out of the Lake in one year.

on profits and losses. The Chinese are so marvellously adaptable because in each country they live according to the exigencies of the climate. In very hot countries they do little manual labour. They use their wits to make others sweat and toil.

As the dusk softens the scene and allows you to see more clearly what the glare of day has hidden in its brilliance, these shores of the Great Lake, overhung by the outward slanting, slim trunks of the high kapok-palms, seem insular enough. You are in Fiji, Samoa, or I know not what South Sea Island. Onto the strand, the long canoes with curling prows and sterns are bundled with mats into the semblance of giant cigars . . . beyond, the nets, stretched upon supple bamboo frames, swing backwards and forwards like huge catarpults . . . here is the light, fragile-seeming, resilience of Oceania.

The Build of the Land

Southern Indo-China is of very simple construction. It is a block of ancient rocks covered by a very thick coating of sandstone. Since the end of the Primary period, many, many millions of years ago, this block has suffered no essential change save that it has been thrust upwards rather unevenly so that towards the west, the country steps down in a series of plateaux towards the Mekong valley, while, towards the east the land breaks off in a scarp facing the China Sea. It is this scarp which, rather improperly, is termed the 'Annam Chain', whereas a more apt name would be the 'Annam Cliffs' since what looks like a sharp, serrated range of mountains when viewed from the east, appears, from the west, to be a vast slope.

The Dangrek mountains and the Cardomom range in Cambodia have a like origin with the Annam chain. The Dangreks are the scarp of the Siamese eastern plateau where it drops to the plain of Cambodia, while the Cardomoms form an abrupt plateau overlooking the Gulf of Siam.

Between the block of the Cardomoms and the Dangrek cliffs is the Great Lake's depression some two thousand square miles in area. This low-lying plain is doubtless the residue of an ancient sea-gulf which was gradually filled in by matter churned down by the Mekong River. The great plain of Cambodia, like that of Cochin-China, has been encouraged by the existence, at no great depth beneath the surface of the China Sea, of a submarine plateau which seems to be, if not of 'recent' formation, at least to have been raised to its present altitude in comparatively recent (geological) times.

But this is a common-place record of things as they are. How much more lively, and indeed, more likely, is the Cambodian version.

When the Tonlé Sap was a great plain with numerous and flourishing cities, the king of the land was an insect-lover, in fact he raised and bred flies. We are not told if they were exceptional flies, or just the ordinary, offensive, buzzing, voracious horse-flies of to-day. But, perhaps in that Golden Age, the flies were much more attractive than those we suffer from now. The *guru, krut* or tutor of the royal princes was also an entomologist, but his speciality was spiders—and spiders are more interesting than flies, and more cunning, as we know. So, there was trouble in the royal household. The *guru's* spiders ate up the king's flies. Whereat, the *guru*, incensed (why, is not quite clear; it should rather have been the king who should have been annoyed at losing his valuable collection of flies and, at the same time, his favourite hobby) rose, like Elijah, into Heaven, whence he cursed the unfortunate king so effectively that the Cambodian Cities of the Plain were engulfed by the waters in which the sovereign and all his men and subjects perished.

Which things are an allegory.

L'alternative d'être ennuyé et harcelé toute la vie . . . ou d'être abandonné de tout et de tous pour n'avoir voulu subir aucune contrainte, cette alternative, dis-je, est irrémédiable.

DELACROIX, (in 1850)

The Resident's house is as cubical and unarchitectural as any other in the place. A northern-facing house, though in the tropics the old adage, a southern-facing house in the north and a northern-facing house in the south, loses much of its significance.

A house with great bays pierced in the walls. A house surrounded by shady trees and relieved by brilliant creeping plants upon it. In these out-of-the-way places you may be sure that your welcome is sincere—if that is any consolation to you. Moreover, as living is comparatively cheap and the French civil servants are comparatively well paid, and receive, moreover, allowances for just such expenses as entertaining you and me to dinner, even the frugal French (and their still more frugal wives) feel no lessening of the pleasure they derive from seeing a new face and talking to a new human being by the carking thought that the whole thing is costing far too much money.

For Siem-Réap is not much visited. It is true that some of the more elaborate tours arranged in the United States took in a trip

overland from Bangkok to Angkor and then on to Phnompenh and Saigon. But the journey was expensive. The tourists could speak no French and they had no time for visits.

We sat in the shade of the residency drawing-room, or living-room or parlour or whatever it was, a room vast and cool yet conveying in some strange way provincial France. Rather like one of those rooms fitted for winter, rooms which you see through open summer windows while the frustrated tinkle of a halting piano trickles through on to the stuffy city's evening. Moreover, this parlour was filled with the jumble of curios and tasteless furniture which 'pink' officials rarely fail to gather round them in the colonies.

And the ritual is always the same so far as my experience goes in the overseas possessions of France. You are received at the local governor's house. You are not expected to return the hospitality, but you get no second official invitation unless you are right out in the bush where things are different. At this first and last meal you are supposed to get acquainted with the other guests and rely upon them for further entertainment during your stay. It is not a bad arrangement.

As a matter of fact, this, my first meal in Siem-Réap, was not a large company. The resident and his wife wanted to talk about England—of all places. They had a boy or a girl, I forget which, who they thought should learn English where it is spoken. One of the most constant difficulties you meet with among French people is their desire to send their own or somebody else's children to England. The story is always the same.

'Paul is a very bright boy, although I say so myself. He has always been interested in English' (why?) 'he took it'—or is taking it—'for his *bachot*, but he needs some practice. Can't you get some of your friends or relations to take him in *au pair* and we should be delighted to have an English boy or girl, etc. . . .'

It is useless to try and make these good people understand that to find the English equivalent of their social group is most hard, and that if their sons and daughters are sent into a social group very different from their own, trouble will result. Moreover, it is still more difficult to make them realise that group for group, class for class, the English have far less book-learning than the French and that practically no one in England wants to improve his mind, or 'get culture,' or send his son or daughter to learn French in France.

I was encouraged by the restful atmosphere and by the well-being induced from having had my hair cut by a snappy young Annamese

barber who waited on me in my hotel with the tools of his trade and a heart bursting with culture. He would engage me in an appreciation of the works of Paul Valéry. Now I am a Valéryan, and even knew the master personally, and was rash enough to mention these things to M. Pham. I was lost. Never has any haircut taken so long. Every individual lock snipped off cost me a dissertation on *La Jeune Parque*, *Eupalinos* or *Monsieur Teste*. Next time I engaged a Chinese barber. He was not so clean. He did not cut hair so well—for me, at any rate—but his conversation was strictly low-brow and confined to inquiries as to my preferences in the matter of pleasure.[1]

Now, in the ease of the residency, I launched forth into a rambling dissertation on why my host and hostess would find it difficult to send Paul to England for nothing, and why, if he went, he would not learn perfect colloquial English in six weeks or two months. Alas, I felt that I was making a deplorable impression and showing myself very un-cooperative, and, indeed, less than grateful for my dinner! Still. . . .

After dinner, wandered in a few of the local worthies. The most nteresting of them, M. Glaize, the overseer of the ruins, I did not meet till the morrow.

There was one man I never saw again and whose job I never learned. He was curious, because in appearance rather like those ageless, respectably-dressed, rather humble men you see fingering volumes on the bookstalls. The favourite reading of such men seems to be works with such titles as *Soyez un Chef . . . Comment devenir un Volontaire*—no, it doesn't mean a volunteer, but a man of strong will—or, just, *Comment réussir*, 'How to succeed,' but who can say what is success? In fact, the sort of man who is always expecting to buy cheap and at the same time be treated by the seller with deference. Such men are often disappointed. I decided that perhaps he was a schoolmaster or had been one. Schoolmasters are men whose lives are divided between one phase in which they suffer no contradiction and another phase in which they enjoy, alas, but little consideration from their fellows! The first phase sometimes blunts their wits. The second not seldom embitters them.

[1] The Annamese in Cambodia are not popular, the Cambodians hate them and the Chinese despise them, but the men of *Viet-Nam* wriggle in everywhere, they are factotums, clerks, small shopkeepers, servants. . . . I am inclined to think that they suffer because of their very virtues. The Cambodians think them pretentious and insolent, the Chinese find that they are poor business men. Then, neither Cambodians nor Chinese (in Cambodia) have much use for Paul Valéry and his works.

But, when the man spoke, he was transformed and revealed himself acute, apparently magnanimous and pretty indifferent to received opinion. Perhaps he was just a writer. . . .

And there was Ménard, about the only one of us who did not, in the last resort, define things by their definitions. Having told, confidentially, in the ear of the Resident's wife, and as a final explanation of all I had so sadly failed to explain before, that the British Empire, someone had said, was won by poker and that we were trying to keep it together by auction bridge, I reclined into comparative silence and enjoyed the greatest pleasure of the hot, sunny lands, that of being able to keep in the house and think how nice it is not to have to go outside.

Ménard and I walked in the warm moonlight.

We soon decided to go the next night to the Angkor dances, and since I still had my government-car, I invited him to do a trip or two in the forest and to some of the more distant ruins and perhaps, who knows? to Battambang or Pailin. These places were just names to me but I threw them about with nonchalance.

Ménard was practical.

'What speed do you think you can do on the jungle tracks, and how many weeks are you going to spend in Siem-Réap?'

I asked for advice.

I never discovered Ménard's means of livelihood nor exactly why he lived in Cambodia. He must have been one of the very few Frenchmen, or indeed Europeans, in the whole land, who had no ostensible job, who was not an official, an employee of an oil company, a representative of a cement firm or of wine-merchants or of some obscure import and export outfit.

And he had, moreover, so far as I could make out, no vague 'mission' to inquire into the psychological reactions of the Cambodians regarding democracy, Socialism or the fine arts or trades unions or fair-play or imperialism or what-not. . . .

He did not paint and, apparently, did not write—books, at any rate. He was not even (or he would never admit to being) a journalist, one of those essential props of the Third (and Fourth) Republic, of whom it is said that their jobs lead anywhere you can imagine, provided you drop them quick enough. Maybe, he had been a journalist and had dropped his trade too soon. He was, in fact, one of those men you meet not seldom in the French possession of, say, North Africa, but rarely in the Far East. He had enough money to pay for his own drinks and to take his turn in paying for others.

Maybe, he had gone native and had a Cambodian concubine or mistress, or even wife, tucked away somewhere . . . but he knew all about the country and a good deal about human beings in general.

"I've seen some old regimes working and I like this one the best I have yet seen. Plenty of men to stroll (not run) for you. Nothing happens. You can just enjoy living. . . ."

Perhaps Ménard had discovered something more valuable than any philosopher's stone. The machine I once heard of on the stage of a Paris music hall. The gossiping *commère*, describing her son's outstanding abilities, wound up by declaring that he had invented a *machine pour repousser le boulot et pour aspirer le pognon*—to shove off the work and suck in the cash. Well, the best way to shove off the work is to live in a country where you don't have to spend half your energies in creating artificial weather by clothing, heat and light; where you can suck in the cash because you need hardly any.

Europeans, in the East and in the tropics, were paid high wages (to compensate them for exile from the European paradise) and with these high wages they were able to save money and, at the same time, to supply themselves with necessities which were not at all necessary except to keep up the pink man's prestige and to give him the illusion that he had at last got his deserts. Much of the pink man's money went in buying things he would never have had at home—scores of servants' services; or in purchasing objects—canned foods and wines—he did not need, or in hiring shoddy-built villas when he would have been much more comfortable in the huts or houses of the country. But one must not go native.

I think Ménard had gone native.

Anyway, no one would tell me much about him. Very nice.

Just the man to travel about with.

We visited Angkor together and some other places. I wonder how he got through the war years. You can go native but you can't look native, especially when the inquisitive conquerors are Japanese. We know of the most unlikely stories of obvious Jews hiding, disguised as French peasants, for the whole of the occupation years and under the eyes of the Germans in France. But the Germans are not very observant. The Japanese are. Maybe Ménard shaved his head and mingled with the men of the Yellow Robe in a monastery.

CHAPTER III

En el año de mil quinientos y setenta se descubrió en este Reyno una ciudad nunca antes vista ni conocida de los naturales . . . es de maravillosa hechura, tiene un muro muy fuerte de piedra, que en redondo tiene cuatro leguas, cuatro braços de ancho y cinco de alto, esta lleno de almenas y las almenas estan muy espesas y en ellas estan pintados elefantes, onças, tigres, leones, aguilas y perros. Tiene muchos escudos y libreros que no se conocen ni entienden . . . las casas son de piedra muy hermosas.

Descripcion del Reyno de Champa y Costumbres de sus Naturales.—
QUIROGA DE SAN ANTONIO (1604).

In 1291, Ser Marco Polo obtained, at last, from the Great Cham, the long sought-for permission to set sail for Europe. The Venetian had, as his charge, the Lady Kutai, whom the Mongol Emperor of China was sending as a bride for the Persian King of Kings. On their way westward the Princess and Marco Millione put in at a Cambodian port and visited Angkor, there to behold the fast-fading glories of the Khmer Empire.

Five years later, one Chou Ta-kwan was a member of the Chinese mission sent to Angkor there to acquaint the King of Chenla (Cambodia) with the pleasure and commands of Yüen-cheng, the new Emperor of China.[1]

The Chinese chroniclers give us generally an impression of sober sense and critical judgment which are wanting in most other supposedly historical writings of the Far East.

Listen to old Chou Ta-kwan describing what he saw at Angkor nearly seven hundred years ago.

'The wall of Angkor Thom is about twenty *li* in circumference and is pierced by five gateways each one of which is flanked by lateral doors. Beyond the wall is a great moat which is crossed by causeways, on either side of the causeways are

[1] That is Timur Khan, grandson and successor of Kublai Khan (Marco Polo's patron) founder of the Yüan dynasty. The word 'Angkor,' despite the fanciful interpretations often proffered, is but the Khmer form of the Sanskrit *nagara* (i.e. a capital) which so often appears in Indian place-names (e.g. Chandernagar, etc.).

fifty-four stone genii, making a hundred and eight in all, a sacred number. These genii look like great warriors in stone, gigantic, terrible.

'The five town gateways are identical in design and construction. The parapets of the bridges are of stone sculptured in the form of nine-headed serpents. On the city gateways are carved five heads of the Buddha in stone . . . that of the middle is adorned with gold. On either side of the gateways are stone elephants. The town walls are entirely composed of blocks of masonry about two *chang* high, the blocks are very carefully and solidly jointed and there are no weeds to be seen growing out of the crevices. The walls bear no crenellations but on the ramparts there are, in some places, *kwang-lang* (caryota ochlandra). Here and there are set empty huts. The inside of the rampart is a sort of slope, of more than ten *chang*, at the summit of which are large doors, shut at nightfall, opened at dawn. There are guards at the doors through which dogs may not pass. The walls make an irregular square at whose four corners are four towers of stone. Criminals who have had their big toes cut off also may not enter the gates. Marking the centre of the *nagara* there is a golden tower[1] flanked by more than twenty stone towers and hundreds of stone cells. To the east are a golden bridge, two lions of gold placed at either side of the bridge and eight golden Buddhas at the foot of the golden chambers. About one *li* to the north of the golden tower is a copper one[2] still higher than the golden tower and whose view is really impressive. At its foot there are more than ten small stone houses. Still a *li* farther to the north is the king's dwelling. In the king's apartments of repose is a golden tower.[3]

'The palace, the official buildings and the houses of the nobles all face the east. The private houses are roofed with lead. The roof-tiles of the official buildings are of yellow glazed pottery.

'The piles of the bridge are enormous and carved thereon are painted Buddhas. The mass of the buildings is magnificent. There are long verandahs and open corridors, daring in plan and without much symmetry. The window sashes of the council chamber are of gold. To the right and to the left are square columns carrying forty or fifty mirrors arranged at the side of the windows. On each side of the royal dais are placed two large metallic mirrors. Before each of

[1] i.e. the Bayon.
[2] i.e. the Baphuon.
[3] i.e. the Phimeanakas.

them is a golden vase and before each vase, an incense-burner also of gold. Below are represented elephants.[1]

'I heard that in the interior of the palace there were many marvellous chambers and rooms, but orders are strict and it is impossible to gain access to them. There is a tower in the palace and upon its summit reposes the sovereign.[2]

'All men and women alike, and beginning with the prince himself, wear their hair rolled up in chignons and have their shoulders bare. They cover their loins with a piece of stuff[3] and the prince only may use tightly woven embroidered stuffs. He also wears a golden crown like that on the head of the *vajradhara*. On those occasions when he wears no diadem, he plaits about his chignon a garland of odoriferous flowers of the jasmin sort.[4] Round his neck hang nearly three pounds weight of large pearls. On his wrists, ankles and fingers he wears bracelets, anklets and rings of gold set with cat's eyes. He goes barefoot and both the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet are dyed red with the red drug. When he goes abroad he holds in his hand a golden sword.[5] The highest dignitaries are carried in palanquins with golden shafts and are shaded by four parasols with golden handles.

'When the prince goes forth, the cavalry of the escort lead the way, then come the standards, the flags and the bands. Three or five hundred girls of the palace each holding in her hand a large candle form a regiment and even in broad daylight their candles are lighted.

'Then come the palace women carrying the royal utensils of gold and silver and collection of ornaments of different shapes and sizes whose use I do not know. After that, come more palace women bearing lances and shields and bucklers. This is the prince's private guard and it forms a distinct regiment.

'Then follow the goat-carts, the horse-chariots—all ornamented with gold. The ministers of State and the princes are on elephant

[1] 'Below' that is, outside. The mirrors are, of course, polished metal mirrors. Chou Ta-kwan probably knew well enough the aspect and appearance of the Council Chamber since here, it would seem, the meetings of the Sino-Cambodian Conference took place. The strangers were not admitted into the private apartments.

[2] However, in the ninth and tenth century bas-reliefs the Khmer soldiers are represented wearing close-cropped hair as do present-day Cambodians, men and women, except the *bakus*.

[3] That is, a loin-cloth. The now universally used *sampot* is a Siamese importation.

[4] i.e. those of the *romduol* (*see* p. 74).

[5] i.e. the gift of the god Indra, the *prah khan* (*see* p. 233) in its sheath.

back, their innumerable parasols are red in colour. After them come the King's wives and concubines, in palanquins, in carriages and in howdahs. With them are certainly more than a hundred parasols garnished with gold. Last of all comes the Prince himself, standing upright upon an elephant and holding in his hand the precious sword. The elephant's tusks are sheathed in gold. More than twenty white parasols, garnished with gold and with golden handles are borne about him. Numerous elephants press about the Prince and cavalry protect him.'

The City of Angkor

Angkor-Thom (that is *nagara-dham*, the great capital), the ancient Yaçodharapura, the capital city of the Khmer realm, lies about a mile to the north of Angkor-Vat. The town is girdled by a broad moat and bounded by a laterite wall some twenty-five feet in height. The enclosure makes a rectangle about eight miles round and pierced by five gateways surmounted by four-faced Lokeçvaras.[1] Each of these gateways is as imposing as a temple-vestibule. The smiling faces, with lowered eyelids, incline towards the causeways whose balustrades are composed of giant figures holding the long bodies of sturdy serpents and evoking the myth of the Churning of the Sea, that legend of creation, destruction, earth-shaking and terrific, dear to the old Khmers' lords and masters. And the 'Churning of the Sea' is permanent magic to secure Victory and the Ambrosia of Prosperity.

Of the royal city whose splendours Chou Ta-kwan evoked, nothing, of course, remains but what was raised in stone. The surface of the town is now a forest of high trees twisted and twined amid many monuments.

The whole congeries is so overwhelming that your first reaction is one of a lessening of visual sensitiveness. It is, perhaps, better to say a lessening of visual selectiveness. Unless one is already fatigued (and the fatigue of sight-seeing is a cumulative one not to be shaken off in a night or two of rest and sleep) one's eyes do not refuse to register new impressions. One does not remain impervious to the new sights as one does when intoxicated with drink or drugs or surfeit of vision.

No, your memories of Angkor Thom will be vivid enough but they will tend to be ill-balanced as are those reminiscences and memories which reach out to us from early childhood. Nothing but

[1] i.e. the deified spirit of the sovereign the guardian genius of the realm.

chance seems to have determined what was to be retained and what was to be rejected. In fact, you are not in command of your appreciation. The way to see is to glance and not to gaze and let your nature do the rest. Luckily, even where monument follows on monument and ruins edge upon ruins, the walls of vegetation screen and hide and curtain, dividing each setting from the next, so that you have some time to relax.

Were all these storeyed temples, palaces and sanctuaries to rise up from great swept spaces you would be surfeited with monotony. But as it is, most of the masonry masses seem to be some fantastic flowering of the jungle.

The hoary trunks and high-ribbed, twisting, wriggling roots of trees have riven so many of the buildings that those unrestored seem to have been bulged and split by pressure from within as though the divinities and spirits of the shrines had burst the narrow confinement wherein men sought to seclude them.

So you move through the forest and you are surrounded by grey monsters in a green, glaucous sea of leaves. Some of the monsters, you would swear, have clung to island-rocks. Others lie in the pale chrysoprase depths.

A few of the monuments have been cleared and they stand out massive and challenging in a penetrating sunlight which cannot, however, either belittle or subdue them. By moonlight such buildings take on an appearance of solid majesty which is awe-inspiring.

Some of the shrines you might think had been transported by divine magic straight from India. But look closer and you will perceive that another than Indian spirit has informed the artists who fashioned the monuments of the Khmers. . . .

The Universal Order

All colonial Indian architecture, that is to say, the architecture of the lands civilized from India, is inspired by a conception whereby there is supposed to exist a magic relation between Man and the Universe. Men are under the sway of cosmic forces and we cannot prosper unless we are in harmony with the Laws of the Universe. And this harmony was sought by the fashioning of cities and temples as microcosms or replicas of the cosmological edifice.

Both Hinduistic and Buddhist cosmography postulated a central mountain or Mount Meru around which continents and oceans formed concentric circles. This Mount Meru goes down as far as it goes up. It is the axis of the Universe. Thus, the bas-reliefs at the

Angkor Vat: Gallery on the Second Storey





base of the Bayon (see below) bear a huge serpent, symbol of the seas, while the interior wall of the Leper King's Terrace is decorated with demons (inhabitants of the submerged Meru), and the outer face shows *garudas* and *nagas* which haunt the flanks of the terrestrial Meru.

In all these things, the Khmers built as did, for instance, the Javanese and other peoples of 'colonial India.' What made the Khmer temples and holy hills unique was the cult therein and thereupon celebrated. . . .

A crumbling Gate of Victory into Angkor Thom is so festooned with leaves and surrounded by trees that the portal itself seems one of those fantastic rocks of the North American south-west, weathered stones to which men give fanciful names, exciting the curiosity and serving the credulity of tourists. And leading to and from this Gate of Victory, a parallel wall of giants, great, burly, sturdy giants, giants with individuality, grab and grasp the immensely long and slightly undulating body of the seven-headed serpent, the totem and symbol of the realm—it is a fine, impressive, living Avenue of Empire.

In Indian legend the rainbow is the bridge between gods and men, and the serpent (or *naga*) balustrades bordering the Khmer bridges are the image of the rainbow. The *naga*-bordered bridge of the Khmers dates back, at least, to the ninth century, and each city-bridge, leading to a city-gate, symbolizes the royal and divine power which flows out from the King over the whole earth.

Recent excavators have shown that there was within the city walls of Angkor Thom another moat and that the five principal avenues of the city were bordered, for all their length, and at intervals, with masonry-contained pools, bathing pools, like those of India, and fitted with steps of laterite leading down into the waters. Angkor Thom was a garden city, better planned than most of the blueprints offered to-day to our ingenuous curiosity as images of our future paradise. The basins and the canals were intercommunicating. An ingenious hydraulic system maintained a constant water-level in pools, reservoirs and canals . . . and while the old Khmers were fashioning these things, our ancestors in England had not possessed baths since the departure of the Romans.

Yaçovarman, successor in the third degree, to Jayavarman II, was the first to leave Hariharalaya for Angkor. Yaçovarman (889-910) built in the last years of the ninth century, around the Phnom Bakheng, the city of Yaçodharapura. The temple of the god-king, on

Angkor Vat: The South-west Corner

the Bakheng hill, was the centre of the new town. The king also had constructed to the east of the city an immense artificial lake, the *Yaçodharatataka*, now known as the eastern Baray. Yaçovarman's buildings were at least in part of brick.

For five centuries thereafter (save for a period from 921 to 944, when Jayavarman IV and his successor made their capital at Koh Ker) Angkor was the capital city of the Khmer Empire.

From the ninth to the twelfth centuries the Khmer kings were the undisputed masters of the Great Lake region and of the Lower Mekong valley. The country was covered with a network of roads and canals. Under Suryavarman I (1002-1049) the Khmers stretched their dominion as far as the Menam river. Suryavarman was a 'usurper' from the country of Ligor[1] who not only knit together firmly the ancient Khmer realm but also annexed to his dominions the Indian-patterned state of Dvaravati, in what is now southern Siam. And Suryavarman brought with him a whole series of new cultural influences from the south-west. It was he who began the war against the Chams, a war which was to last all through the twelfth century until the beginning of the thirteenth.

Es ist nicht genug dass man Talent habe, es gehört mehr dazu um gescheit zu werden; man muss auch in grossen Verhaltnissen leben und Gelegenheit haben, den spielenden Figuren der Zeit in die Karten zu sehen, und selber zu Gewinn und Verlust mitzuspielen.

GOETHE

From about 1113 to 1150 ruled one of the greatest monarchs of the Khmers, Suryavarman II, whose image we may see on the bas-reliefs of the southern gallery of Angkor Vat. He is shown twice, once surrounded by his Court and then, again, standing upon his elephant. His reign was filled with spectacular but rash conquests and he annexed part of the Champa realm. But after his day descended upon the Khmer empire a new cloud of troubles when the Chams took their revenge. In 1177, they carried Angkor, slaughtered the inhabitants and burned the city. Jayavarman VII rebuilt the city. The symbol of divine royalty was no longer the *lingam*. The royal essence dwelt within the statue of Lokeçvara, the *boddhisattva* of Boundless Pity. New Angkor Thom was smaller than the old and it lay within the boundaries of the former city. The

[1] The region of which the present-day town of Nakon Sridharmaraj (in the Siamese Malay States) is the centre.

centre was no longer the Phnom Bakheng, crowned with its shrine of the *devaraja*, the sanctuary sheltering the Divine Phallus, but the middle of the new Angkor Thom was the Bayon of myriad faces, now the Holy Mountain of the Khmer realm. The walls, the towers, the lake of Jayavarman's capital can all be traced and they pattern out the design of the cosmic city.

The Meaning of Angkor

We have seen that Jayavarman II instituted the cult of the Divine King whose symbol was the *lingam* or phallus. And it was more than his symbol. It was the residence and dwelling of the 'Subtle Person'—soul or spirit if we will—of the sovereign. This *lingam* was set up upon a pyramid—a 'mountain'—in the centre of the capital, which was, also, in a magical and mysterious sense, the centre of the universe. The communion between god and divine king was effected daily by the ceremonies of the priests. And when the Divine King ended his earthly life and became wholly a God, his presence continued to hallow his temple. It seems certain, indeed, that some, at least, of the old Khmer monarchs were not cremated, but, in any case, it is most probable that their relics were placed near a statue representing them in their 'divine aspect.' Such statues were the central objects of worship in the great temples which were, therefore, funerary temples, mausolea or even cenotaphs, but, essentially, tombs at which the dead king was adored under the 'aspect' of Vishnu, Shiva or another deity. Thus, when it is said that Angkor Vat is a Temple to Vishnu, we should understand a temple to a deceased king conceived as a form of Vishnu.

This funerary cult of dead kings must be something very antique in Cambodia, something coming from a distant past long before the importation of Indian names and terminology. And the cult has persisted. Little Vehicle Buddhism was affected by it. The ceremonies of the modern Cambodian Court clearly indicate the survival of the Divine King idea.

The Buckler of Victory

Jayavarman VII[1] was undoubtedly what it is usual to call a 'great' monarch. He was an astounding builder. He kept his country's foes at bay. He secured peace within his realm. He prepared the downfall of his successors.

[1] Reigned 1182 to 1201

He had had, what is insign good fortune for a sovereign, that of having passed his youth abroad. Thus, he returned home freed of most of the illusions besetting kings. Moreover, he was acclaimed as his country's saviour since he had rescued it from civil war and anarchy. When he had gathered his full power into his hands he was almost an old man, but he had had time to refound his capital, to annex the Champa realm, to spread Cambodia to its utmost limits and to be happy, so the inscriptions tell us, in his wives. Maybe he was one of those iron-hand in the velvet glove husbands. He saved his country from ruin and raised it to a pinnacle of eminence. He was energetic and ambitious. He had little political sense.

The inscriptions represent him as a fervent and pious Buddhist honouring, according to the Ta Prohm stele, "The Supreme Way leading to Superior Illumination, The Unique Doctrine permitting Comprehension of Reality, The Law which Immortals must honour in the Three Worlds, The Sword destroying the Thicket of Passion."

Inscriptions tell us that Jayavarman established over a hundred hospitals. The sites of fifteen of them have been identified with certainty, and eighteen more of the hospitals have been traced. And these institutions would seem to have been hospitals and not only hospices.

Jayavarman's foundations were placed under the invocation of a Great Vehicle Buddhist divinity, known as the 'Master of Remedies Resplendant as Beryl.' A bas-relief on the tympanum of the so-called 'Chapel of the Hospital' (to the east of the Takeo) there is represented a clinical scene which looks like treatment for that complication of leprosy whereby the fingers become contracted. Women, nurses it may be, appear to be massaging the hands and legs of a man on either side of whom are vases filled with round fruits, which may possibly be the pods of the *krabao* (that is, chaulmoogra), a tree very common in the Forest of Angkor and used in the treatment of leprosy.

Some of the King's inscriptions tell us details of the hospital organization. 'All the Four Castes' might use the hospitals, but this phrase should not be taken to mean that in the twelfth century Cambodian society was patterned upon that of India. The words are, no doubt, merely conventional ones to describe all sorts and conditions of men. Each hospital had two doctors and a fairly numerous staff. The institutions seem to have used vast quantities of stores, and may, therefore, have been in some degree hospices,

but that treatment was administered in them is not doubtful. There are notices of febrifuges, of ointment for curing piles. . . .

And the cures were spiritual as well as physical. 'It is public sorrow which causes the sorrow of sovereigns and not their own sorrows' runs the Edict of Jayavarman.

To this same monarch the Cambodians owed their first *salas*, or rest-houses, which are now such an essential feature of the country. Jayavarman constructed paved highways and great laterite bridges, some of which have survived. Besides the new town of Angkor he put up the Bayon, Banteay Kdei, Ta Prohm, Ta Som, Kroi Ko, Ta Nei, the Vat Nokor at Kompong Cham, and perhaps the Banteay Chhmar and the Prah Khan. . . . A prodigious builder . . . *si monumentum requieres* . . .

The well-planned city of New Angkor was inhabited by a people moulded and disciplined by a divine king. As empire swells and prosperity grows and the people become proud, so must also the sovereign increase in power and prestige if catastrophe is to be avoided. It is not enough that the monarch's yoke should bear down heavily upon his people. They will share his pride and his contempt for the foes and foreigners he has conquered, even if he shows himself harsh to his own subjects. No, his authority must be increased and augmented. He must represent the Divine Order. Prosperity, empire, wealth and riches demand rigid conventions and monstrous lies, inevitable, necessary lies, for their conservation. Man can achieve nothing at all unless he uses the magic words of myth . . .

Bayon

There are great buildings and great ruins on every side and, since the site of Angkor Thom is still, very largely, covered with forest, it is difficult to get one's bearings.

You are lost in what Pierre Loti called

le pâle branchage lisse aux mouchetures de serpent et son large dôme de feuilles.

Then you will come upon the Bayon almost suddenly. You are at its foot before you realize that it is there. It is almost slowly that you look up and up to see, soaring above you, a stupendous, impossible mountain of huge faces. And there are fifty-one towers or pinnacles, and each of them carries four gigantic masks.

This mysterious monument of complicated plan, with deep

courts like wells and dusky galleries, alone of Khmer buildings, had no containing wall—its walls were those of the city itself.

King Jayavarman VII considered himself a Living Buddha—he had but transposed the Divine King to another plane. His inscriptions all invoke a Buddhist Trinity, and what is probably his first building was put up to shelter an image of his mother, and in the hope that she would become identified with *Prajnaparamita*, the mystical mother of Buddhas.

Jayavarman himself was an incarnation of the Mahāyāna deity Avalokiteçvara or Lokeçvara, 'Protector of the World,' and the myriad faces of the Bayon are the king's faces, the visages of the Living Buddha. The great countenances have splendid, slow smiles. The large mouths and clean-cut, wide-nostrilled noses remind you of those you may admire sometimes among the vivid, vibrating, stoutly lithe northern women of Scandinavian Europe. But at the Bayon a shadow of Indian resignation hovers about.

At least there is resignation in some lights and from some angles when the strangely captivating lines of the lips tremble and relax. At other moments the faces are harsh and stern, and then, again they break into a grin and this whole super-realist, sacred folly takes on the changeability of dreams.

A few years ago the Bayon was drooping into ruins. It had been defaced by tourist-vandals—for up to a comparatively few years ago there was nothing to prevent any traveller from carrying off anything he could handle—and the Bayon is a late construction. The Khmers built carelessly often. They were pressed for time. Each monarch would have his temple-mausolium ready as soon as possible. Lack of care in construction is noticeable all through the twelfth century. Moreover, the monuments were, in olden times, ravaged by the searchers for gold and precious metals and jewels. Furthermore, few of the Khmer buildings had foundations fit to support the vast burden laid upon a sandy and, sometimes, soggy soil.

The Khmers used no mortar. The masonry blocks were placed directly one above the other and the whole clamped together with iron brackets. As the surface was smoothed with some coating of stucco, nothing was seen of the construction. But with the rusting away of the metal clamps, the vast masses of stone were held together merely by their own weight.

Late Khmer art displays an obvious desire to strike the imagination, to create an atmosphere almost of apotheosis. Thus, not a few of the monuments of this period have a super-realist and dream-

like, unearthly and fantastic character rarely equalled elsewhere upon this earth.

But the Khmer master-masons and architects were obviously sagging under a task too onerous for them. Moreover, they were served by workmen who were far from commanding the technical ability of former times. It is, of course, possible that much of what we find to question in the works of Jayavarman may be due to hasty execution, to the pressing forward of a multiple of great works and to the ruthless utilization of unskilled prisoner-slaves. The Bayon was one of the first of the Khmer buildings to be saved by the anastylosis which had been practised with such success by the Dutch in their islands of the East.[1]

It was for long thought that the Bayon was the 'Middle Mount,' mentioned in the ancient Khmer texts as the real, as well as the symbolic, centre of the city founded towards the end of the ninth century by King Yaçovarman I, a pious devotee of the great god Shiva. So the faces were identified as those of Shiva and many a pleasing legend woven around the monument. As a matter of fact, although the Bayon was erected in honour of Lokeçvara, the temple, later, did serve for a time as a Shivaite shrine. The salving image of Lokeçvara was formerly to be seen not only on the towers into which the monstrous Bayon sprouts, but also upon the façades of the temple and in its bas-reliefs.

Here also was venerated a Buddha of gigantic stature, seated in the Pose of Meditation on the folds of an immense serpent, whose seven cobra-heads rise, as an aureole, behind the Blessed One. At the beginning of the thirteenth century when a violent Hinduistic reaction swept away the Buddhism of Jayavarman VII, the statue was bashed to pieces and the iconoclasts cast the fragments into a well beneath the cell where the image had formerly been sheltered. At this same time the Lokeçvaras of the façade were hacked off—all except one, which by some careless miracle, escaped. The Lokeçvaras were replaced by phalli grossly carved from the mutilated surface of the monument.

The Buddha whom the Brahmins had rejected was discovered only in 1934. It was possible to reconstruct it almost complete and you may now see the statue under a shelter not far from the Royal Terrace.

[1] Each block of a monument to be reconstructed by anastylosis, is numbered and photographed, then the whole is taken down and built up again as one would a jig-saw puzzle.

The bas-reliefs of the Bayon are a rich world in themselves, and form what is really the lasting value and instruction of the folly. These bas-reliefs present the life of the Khmers as it was lived in the ninth century—the people, the markets, the hunting, fishing, fighting, dancing,—and the men and women prostrated before their gods. The exterior galleries show scenes rather like those of Banteai Chhmar, that is to say, scenes of local history, fighting between Khmers and Chams—the latter distinguished by their stepped head-dresses like that portrayed upon the *mukhalinga* or Royal Phallus of Mi-So'n, in what used to be old Champa, but is now Annam.

The scenes on the interior galleries are easier to identify. Here is mythology. The legend of Pradyumna, son of Krishna and Rukmini, who was thrown into the sea by the demon, Çambara, and swallowed by a fish which was miraculously caught. The Churning of the Sea, when such poison was given off that when Shiva drank it and thus saved the world from death, his throat became so stained that, thereafter, one of his most noble names was *Nilkantha* or Blue Neck. Then you see Kama reduced to ashes by Shiva's fire. And Ravana, the demon king of the Ramayana, crushed by Shiva. The place of honour in all these carvings is given to Shiva so that the bas-reliefs date clearly from a time when the Bayon was predominantly a Shivaite shrine.[1] It is not probable that all the bas-reliefs of the Bayon date from the time of Jayavarman VII. Indeed, it seems plausible that nearly all of them may have been executed during the reign of one of his successors—possibly Indravarman II.

The Legend of the Blessed One

Without seeking to apply to the Buddhist legend any textual or archæological higher criticism, here, briefly, is the story of the Buddha *as it influenced Indo-China.*

What we call Buddhism was founded in the sixth century before our era by a noble of the Çakya tribe, who later became known as the 'Buddha,' that is the Enlightened One or the Illuminated One, he who received the grace of spiritual truth. Siddhartha (the Buddha's name in the world) was born on the confines of Oudh and Nepal and retired when he was aged thirty to Bihar, where he received Illumination (*bodhi*) at Bodh-Gaya. He preached his first sermon at

[1] As you leave the Bayon there is nearby a small monument in what is usually, and hopefully, described as 'Khmer style' to the memory of Jean Commaille, first keeper of the ruins murdered here on 29th April, 1916.

Benares and died nearby at a very advanced age. Such is the outline of the Buddha's life.

His legend is richly illustrated by a wealth of sculpture and painting. His mother, Queen Maya, one night dreamed that she had conceived a white elephant.[1] When she told her dream, the wise men assured her that she would bring forth a son whose career would be marvellous and magnificent.

The Birth

Maya went forth into the gardens of her palace and seized the branch of a sacred tree,[2] whereupon there issued from her right flank a child they called Siddhartha.

The First Steps

The gods caught up the infant upon a white cloth and bathed him, as kings are bathed at their coronation, with water poured from two copper jars. As soon as the child set foot on the ground, he took seven steps in each of the four cardinal directions and under each of his footsteps arose a lotus.

The Life of Pleasure

The child lived as a prince in the palace of his father who, fearing that he might not become the glorious king it seemed he was to be, surrounded him with diversions and pleasures and allowed him to see nothing ugly or unclean.

The Four Departures.

Siddhartha married and begot a son. He lived amid his harem with no cares and no idea of the world's misery until one day he managed, despite his father's command, to break out of the palace grounds. On his way he met an old man begging. So he knew that old age and poverty existed. A second time he left the palace and met a sick man, learning thus that pain existed. A third time he saw a corpse being carried to cremation and had the revelation of death. A fourth time he encountered a monk[3] who preached to him the way of renunciation and of detachment, which he decided to follow.

[1] Hence, of course, the extreme deference paid in Siam and in Cambodia to 'white' elephants.

[2] The sacred tree complex makes its appearance very early in the Buddhist story.

[3] The *bhikshu*, or wandering ascetic, existed in India long before his name was taken for the Buddhist 'monks'—Buddhism is rooted in the older faiths of India. Buddhism is a reinterpretation.

The Sleep of the Women

Siddhartha's father, the king, was afflicted by his son's decision and vainly spread new pleasures before him. One night, entering his harem very late, he found, fallen asleep, the women who, as usual, were awaiting him with their instruments of music.

The Great Departure

Siddhartha was struck by the vision of the sleeping women, sprawling open-mouthed and slack. For the first time he saw beneath their beauty and decided to retire as a solitary. He left the palace immediately, and on horseback, accompanied only by his equerry. That the flight might pass unknown, the gods held up the horses' hoofs so that they made no noise.

Once in the forest, Siddhartha stripped himself of his jewels and his arms which he gave to his equerry. He said farewell to him and to his courser.

Siddhartha, whom we must now call Gautama (his clan-name), began to lead the most ascetic of lives until the gods saw him so enfeebled in mind and body that they came and begged him to take food. Then he bathed in the sacred Nairanjana river and assumed a *bikshu's* robe, thus becoming Çakyamuni, or the monk of the Çakya (his countrymen's name). He drank an offering of milk made to him by a pious woman. Then he sat down for meditation under a fig tree whose shade miraculously stayed changeless to shelter him.

His meditation led him to follow up the 'chain of causality.' Everything is suffering. Why? Because sorrow comes from thirst for existence, and such thirst comes from our attachment to the mechanism of the senses and to the play of knowledge, and this attachment itself is a legacy from our past existences which play the role of a sort of heredity or second nature. And this legacy derives its power from ignorance which induces us to accept as really our own the adventitious self composed of layers of our incalculable past. The cycle of transmigrations will be broken when is exhausted the accumulation of acts which mould our comportment.

In order to dissipate ignorance, we must, therefore, perform an act of intelligence and of comprehension to convince ourselves of the reality of the bonds of causality.

It will be seen that even in this, the 'classical' story of the Buddha's meditations, the material upon which he worked was that afforded by the antique religions of his land. What we call Buddhism was as much—or as little—reformed 'Hinduism' as was Christianity

reformed 'Judaism.' It is in their later developments abroad—for both religions died in the land of their birth—that Buddhism and Christianity took on a shape and face very different from that of the faiths from which they sprang.

At the moment when Çakyamuni was about to discover the remedy for the suffering of the world in attaining Illumination (*bodhi*) the demon Mara[1] sent his armies of monstrous devils to attack the hermit. But their projectiles on touching his body turned to flowers and offerings instead of weapons and insults. Whereupon Çakyamuni, stretching down his right hand towards the ground,[2] took the Earth as witness of his victory. Terror having failed, Mara assailed the anchorite with three most beautiful and voluptuous maidens. He did not deign to look at them, but as they surrounded him they turned into hideous hags. Çakyamuni, his thought and soul more concentrated than before, achieved his salving meditation. A little later, he preached his first sermon at Sarnath, near Benares. The first disciples joined him and began an errant life as wandering beggars spreading the doctrine of the Buddha. After a long life devoted to preaching, the Buddha, one day lay down upon his right side and entered into supreme bliss, having broken the chain of his transmigrations.

His body was burnt and the ashes divided among different stupas.

The Serpent Bride

North of the Bayon is the *veal* or plain, marking, no doubt, the site of the impermanent wooden and bamboo houses of the people.[3] To the north-west of the plain is the Royal Forbidden City into which Chou Ta-kwan could only get a peep. In the Forbidden City are the royal palace and the Phimeanakas.

The Phimeanakas was begun under Yaçovarman (eleventh century) and completed during the reign of his successor, Harshavarman. The building was probably dedicated to Vishnu in his 'Krishna incarnation.' But, of course, really to the Royal Phallus. The

[1] Demon, in the Buddhist story, but he is also a form of the Hinduist god of Love and Death.

[2] Making Earth-touching attitude which remains the most characteristic of all those of the Buddha.

[3] We need not conclude because the mass of the people lived in wood or bamboo houses that it was, of necessity, uncomfortably or unhealthily lodged. If any medieval Japanese city (I mean a Japanese city such as Kyoto with a wealth of medieval buildings) were to be over-grown with jungle, we should have little to go upon in our attempt to reconstruct the manner of life of that city's population.

monument is a pyramid surmounted by a little sanctuary of carved laterite and sandstone. Here in this high-perched shrine, the Khmer king was supposed to lie with the nine-headed serpent. But no sovereign would sleep in so cramped a cell and so inconvenient a room. Doubtless, the Celestial Protecting Spirit was held to take up its abode in the Phimeanakas.

We must not accept too literally what the chroniclers recount. At the best they tell the tale as it was told to them, that is to say, with a wealth of metaphor, parable and allegory, which is the proper appanage of sacred things.

Throughout the time the Khmer Empire lasted the sovereigns must perform a strange ceremony. Alone, and at night, they must proceed to the uppermost chamber of a tower and there embrace a snake. But it may well be that the 'snake' was a *nagi* woman, held to embody the totemistic snake or serpent. As an analogous rite appears to have survived in Java until quite recent times, we have, no doubt, here, remnants of a wide-spread cult.

Chou Ta-Kwan gives details:

'In the Royal Palace of Angkor Thom there is a golden tower in whose topmost chamber sleeps the King. All the natives hold that in the tower also lives the soul of a seven-headed serpent, master of all the realm's soil. And every night this serpent takes on the form and shape of a woman with whom the sovereign lies. If, one night, the soul of this serpent does not appear, then the moment for the King's death has come. If the King fails, even for one night, to visit the tower, then there happens to him some mischance.'

So, here is our clue to the power and sanctity of the tutelary serpents. The King by his holy copulation performs a fertility rite securing prosperity to his land. When his virility fails and he can no longer pleasure the ghostly serpent, then the time for his death has come, since an impotent sovereign is not only useless but he is positively baleful, bringing down disaster and calamity. He must be killed. We need not suppose that this curious rite was always observed or that the Khmer kings spent most of their strength in intercourse with the Spirit of the Soil, but it may be that all women who shared the Khmer kings' couch were held to be incarnations of the sacred *nagi*. . . .

To this day, in Cambodian marriage-ceremonies[1] the bridegroom

[1] It is a common feature of marriage-ceremonies that the bride and bridegroom should be considered as Queen and King for a day. In many lands (e.g., Cambodia and Old China) the wedding garment of the couple is royal costume. In the Orthodox Church men and women are married crowned with royal crowns.

and the bride are held to play the parts of the King and the Serpent-Princess. While the relations sit round in a circle enclosing the young couple, little disks of metal supporting the sacred fire of candles are passed from hand to hand.

And the music plays the antique air of the Divine Thong and the Lady Nagi. *La Charmeuse de Serpents.*

Now here is the story of the Serpent Keng Kang, father of all snakes, whose insidious embraces of the Lady Re brought serpents into the world and all our woes.

The Story of the Serpent Keng Kang.

At the beginning of the world there was only one serpent, Keng Kang, and a man and his wife called Re. The man traded in amber and for his traffic used to travel. One day while he was away, Re went into the forest to cut wood and let her axe fall into the lair of Keng Kang. She begged the serpent to give her back the axe but this he consented to do only on condition that every night he should visit her in her hut and possess her. Re accepted the conditions and every night the great serpent, guided by Et, the daughter of Re, who unwillingly had to serve as procuress for her own mother, the serpent glided into the hut of the man.

One day he saw that Re was pregnant. He questioned his daughter who confessed all. So the man hid and as the serpent entered the hut he cut off his head and then his tail and then told his daughter to cook the body and serve it to Re.

But a crow, a magic crow, told the woman of the horrid feast prepared for her. Now, when the man saw that his wife was nearing her term, he took her to a bathing pool saying that they would bathe together. Then he slashed off her head with a sabre. But from the gaping wound of the bloody neck spurted out thousands and thousands of snakes which the man tried in vain to catch. They wriggled into the crevices of the earth and into the waters, and they were the ancestors of all the snakes and serpents now peopling the earth.

The Royal Palace

The Palace of Angkor Thom was a wooden structure, as were all the dwellings of mortals, and of it nothing, of course, remains. The 'Elephant Terrace,' however, with a frieze of life-sized animals, may have been, in part, a permanent platform on which the sovereigns took the salute at reviews. And this platform was contiguous to the

council chamber in which Chou Ta-kwan and his colleagues held their conferences with the Khmer delegates. The central part of the Terrace, however, is decorated with large figures of upright garudas with upraised arms, these creatures were, doubtless, caryatids supporting the superstructure of part of the royal palace.

The Leper King

The Elephant Terrace continues northwards as the 'Terrace of the Leper King,' the *sdach komlong* of Cambodian legend. On one of the inner galleries of the Bayon is portrayed the 'Story of the Leper King,' to whom a holy Brahmin recommended a bath of boiling medicinal herbs. But the monarch was less trusting than the sovereign of the Greek story. The Brahmin must first try the remedy himself:

The Terrace of the Leper King is adorned with a great row of Divine Dancers emerging from the soil and supporting, apparently with their serpent-diadems, the upper storeys of sculpture. Upon the Terrace is seated a grave, noble stone figure which the Cambodians call the 'Leper King.' It is a divine statue, permanent among the impermanence of jungle and ruin. But this 'Leper King' is no leper and no earthly monarch, his tousled hair and the two fangs just visible at the corners of his mouth, proclaim his daemonic nature. He is a Deity of Death, perhaps Yama. His right hand is empty, but may well have held a sceptre, and the three headless statues which accompany him upon the Terrace had batons or sceptres in their right hands.

It is probable that the Terrace was a 'burning-ghat' or permanent place for cremations, its position to the north of the Palace suggests those of the crematoria in Phnompenh and Bangkok.

The Glories of Angkor Thom

Near the eastern *gopura* (or city gateway, literally 'ox-door') built by Yaçovarman, is an inscription reciting the oath of allegiance sworn in 1001 to Suryavarman by eight hundred 'kings' and chieftains. The formula is interesting since it is almost identical, both in language and in phrasing, with that still used at the Cambodian Court.

The temple-mountain erected by Yaçovarman I in the middle and the midst of his city and in the ninth century, is what is now called the Phnom Bakheng. It is a stepped pyramid whose sanctuaries, crowning a little wooded hill, were dedicated to the cult of the

Royal Phallus. This Bakheng was the geometrical centre of a vast rectangle some ten miles square. Its outline can still be seen from the air. The bordering ditches are now used to water the paddy-fields fed by the Siem-Réap river.

On the other hand, the temple-hill founded in 881 by Indravarman as the centre of his capital, Hariharalaya (the city which preceded Angkor), is now known as the Bakon. Until 1936, this monument looked like an enormous stepped pyramid, and it was supposed that its crowning sanctuary had been made of wood and had perished. In September, 1936, Monsieur Marchal (the then Keeper of Angkor) just before he left Indo-China for good, began work on the summit of the Bakon, in order to trace the foundations of the sanctuary. A sculptured base and pieces of carved stone came to light. It was, therefore, clear that the shrine had been made of stone and had been wilfully destroyed. M. Glaize has attempted a reconstruction of the sanctuary whose decoration (or such of it as has survived) is not at all in the ninth century style but in that of the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century. The lower storeys have now been pieced together. Only the summit is lacking. On the fourth terrace of the pyramid, and just below the sanctuary, were discovered traces of a number of small shrines in typical ninth-century style and recalling the arrangement of the Phnom Bakheng. It is clear, therefore, that as early as the ninth century, the Khmers were building stepped pyramids carrying small sanctuaries. In fact, we have here the humble prototype of the temples whose full, magnificent development we see at Angkor Vat itself.

The Baphuon is another mountain-sanctuary bearing upon its last terrace a ruined sanctuary probably covered in ancient times with sheets of gilded copper. The shrine rises about a hundred and thirty feet up, but its height in olden days must have been at least twelve or fourteen feet greater. The walls are covered with high relief scenes of history. The decoration of floral scrolls is very magnificent and Indian. This Baphuon was, it seems, 'Golden Mountain' put up by Jayavarman V (969-1001).

The Prah Palilai should be called the 'Pariley Yaka,' the traditional name of the wood where the Buddha reposed upon his flight and was served by an elephant. The monument lies about two hundred yards north of the north-west gateway of the north wall of the palace. The Prah Palilai was restored just before 1939. It is a doubly precious monument since it is a Buddhist shrine erected, not to the glory of the *boddhisattva* Lokeçvara, but to that of the historical

Buddha, Sakyamuni himself. And, moreover, for some reason or another, the Prah Palilai was never mutilated by Brahmanist iconoclasts as were all the other Khmer Buddhist shrines.

A Legend of Angkor Vat

To this day, most of the Cambodians will not believe that their ancestors raised the great monuments of the forests.

Mighty Angkor Vat was built by Indra, Lord of Heaven, who moulded the temple in clay and then poured over it a sort of icing whereby the sanctuary was solidified. And the holes you may see here and there in the walls are the imprints of the great God's divine fingers. . . .

Or legend has it that Angkor Vat was not, indeed, man-made but that the temple rose at the bidding of divine Preas Pusnokar, come down from the Paradise of Indra.

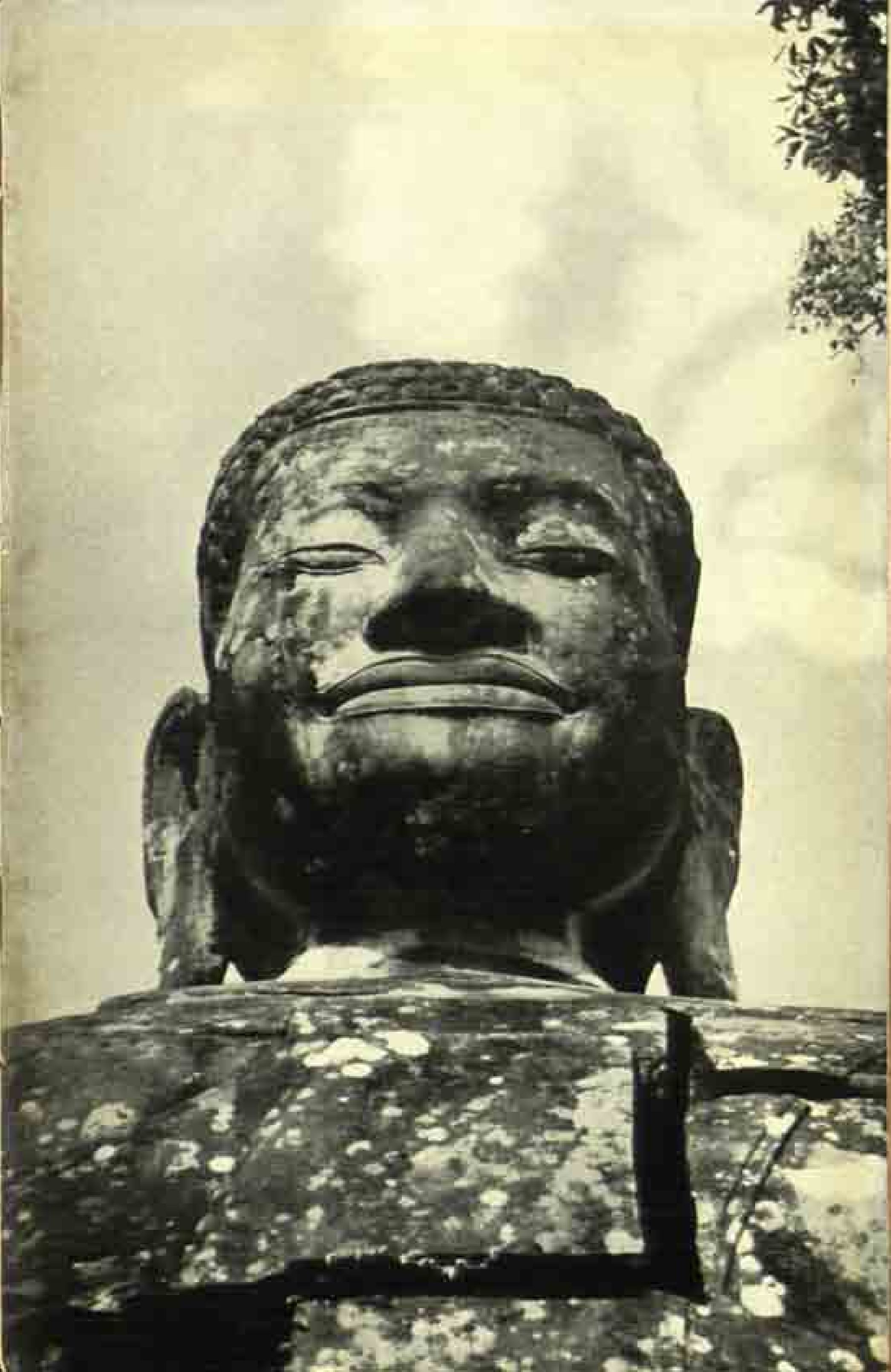
'Oh! marvel. There reigned in those days[1] a virtuous King named Vong Aschar, a powerful Prince, who showered benefits upon his people. The Queen, his spouse, the beauteous Teyvodey, was surrounded by an innumerable bevy of fresh and supple maidens who waited upon her day and night. One hundred and one vassal princes paid the King tribute, bringing continuously presents of all kinds. Incalculable were the riches of this monarch. Precious stones, gold, silver, bracelets, carpets, silks, embroideries and figured stuffs. Countless were the elephants, the chariots, the horses, the litters, the canopies, the parasols, the fringed curtains and the golden garlands. Innumerable were the warriors of all arms, all armies and the lords and ladies who adorned the King's Court.'

But Great Indra, looking down upon his favourite Land of the Khmers, noted that its King and Queen were childless. So, taking advantage of the Queen's being without the palace, Great Indra floated down towards earth as a blaze of blue, so that men shouted: 'Light is descending upon us!' Then Great Indra wooed and won the queen, not in a shower of gold, but in a rain of blossoms, whereby she was got with child. And when she brought forth her son she named him, Preas Ket Mealea, that is 'The Floral Light.'

At the time that these things were happening upon the earth, a goddess, who had dared to steal six flowers from the garden of a poor Chinese, was condemned by Great Indra to live, as expiation, for six years upon earth and among men. During that time, the unfortunate goddess was constrained to be the spouse of the Chinese,

[1] 'The Sutra of Prea Ket Mealea.' One may ask here, as so often, 'what days?'

Angkor Thom: The Great Buddha of Tep Pranam (circa 1300 A.D.)





to whom she bore a son they named Preas Pusnokar, whose pleasure and urge it was, while still an infant, to trace plans and to carve stone. When the goddess's calvary upon this earth was accomplished, she was caught upon into Heaven, after she had left upon her pillow six flowers to apprise her husband of her identity.

When Preas Pusnokar was ten years of age, he set forth to find his mother, whom he reached after countless difficulties and the experience of many dangers. She presented her earth-born offspring to Great Indra, who bound the boy as a pupil to gods cunning in the arts of construction and building.

While Preas Pusnokar was serving his celestial apprenticeship, Great Indra swept up his earth-born son, Preas Ket Mealea, into his bosom so that the child might be shown the glories of Tavatimsa, or Paradise, and thus be assured of long life upon earth and among men. To render more certain his son's length of days, the divine father bathed the boy seven times a day for seven days in a pool of miraculous waters.

But, soon the time came for the return to earth of the two children of earth and Great Indra sent them down among men with orders that Preas Pusnokar should, in the world, reproduce some edifice of Paradise chosen by Preas Ket Mealea, who, in his humility, dared not covet any building more gorgeous than that of his divine father's byres.

So Preas Pusnokar designed at Angkor a copy of the celestial dairy which became the palace and temple of King Jayavarman II, since it was under this name that Preas Ket Mealea ruled over the Khmers.[1] For his son's coronation, Great Indra deigned to visit this earth of ours, and to give to his child's realm its name of Kambuja while establishing its divine institutions. Moreover, he confided to the Khmers the Sacred Sword (*prah khan*), which is the lightning of Indra, and is kept to this day in the royal palace.

Divine Dancers

And the *apsaras*, the divine dancers of Paradise, brought down to the land of Cambodia, the mysteries and secrets of the Heavenly ballet. . . .

Running about, and squirming and playing, you may see, here and there near great Angkor Vat, little skinny girl-children,

[1] The Legend of King Jayavarman, may not be very old, but it is firmly anchored in Cambodia. But stories become very firmly anchored very quickly among a largely illiterate population, as we may see if we reflect upon the short life of some of our own most cherished myths.

Angkor Thom: The Ta Prohm (*p.* 160)

swarthy and grinning, clad in white cotton singlets, sash-drawers . . . there's one in a tartan petticoat, it is the Royal Stuart hunting tartan, by the way . . . ugly little brats, simian and nice . . . then you will see them transformed into distant goddesses, divine, intangible . . . transformed by the mysteries and secrets of the Heavenly ballet . . . this is Great Indra's magic indeed.

On the entablatures, on the friezes and on the walls of Angkor Vat's galleries is an unending procession of Divine dancers. A precious adornment of the vast temple is the unending bevy of *apsaras*, and of gracious *devadatas*, which quickens the façades and welcomes the visitor at the entrance to each gallery. The elegant figures hide, smiling and dreaming in the half-shadows of the halls and narrow vestibules. Sculptured in bas-relief, sometimes framed within slight wavy arches, sometimes standing out from a background of flowers and leaves, they bear, with nonchalance, their rich diadems, bracelets and necklaces. They wear no more clothing than a modern bathing-beach belle, but the Khmer Divine Dancers and Maids of Paradise are cunningly crowned, their hair tressed and waved and their gestures are slightly artificial in their grace.

The contrast between the natural movements of the arms and hands and the awkward presentation of the feet (seen always in profile) make one wonder whether we have not here some constant convention for expressing stability and immobility of the lower limbs[1]. . . .

And, again, all these sculptures in high, or in low, relief, blazed with colour, as did the monuments of Greece and of our medieval Europe. Above all, the nine pinnacles of Angkor Vat, lavishly painted, gilded or sheathed in gold, flashed and glowed like jewelled lotuses in the sunlight or as celestial gems under the moon. . . .

The sculptured decoration of the Vat is of incredible richness. Around the pediments and intermingled with historical scenes, crawl and writhe monsters with fiery crests whose pointed fangs are buried in the scaly bellies of polycephalous serpents. The lintels are transformed into a profusion of vigorously modelled floral designs. The walls are clothed in a sculptured tapestry of low-relief, whose *motifs* are taken up and repeated on the frames of door and window.

[1] The carving and sculpture of Angkor Vat is, however, as far as the high reliefs are concerned, not a little careless and clumsy, even harsh and mechanical. These things partake already of an art of decadence very different from the spring-like Indian beauty of Banteai Srei. Still, from afar, the Freize of the Divine Dancers at Angkor Vat loses its awkwardness and conventionality and takes on a majesty of slow movement and aloofness.

When this wall-tapestry was alive with colour the pillared galleries of Angkor must have seemed of incomparable sumptuosity. Praying Brahmins crouch at the bases of the pillars. Before each entrance-stair are stone lions on guard, while majestic *nagas*, winding away into balustrades, rear into a fan their threatening heads . . . and then, again, these polycephalous serpents' heads remind you of fat, seven-fingered hands, flaring, but swathed in some monstrous mittens.

The vast temple of Angkor was raised by King Suryavarman II in the middle of the twelfth century. The sanctuary is, therefore, about contemporary with great Romanesque buildings of the Plantagenets, both in France and England. But Angkor Vat is among the later of Khmer monuments and hardly the most precious, despite its renown, its overwhelming size and its very real majesty.

The plan of the temple is rigorously geometrical. Around a hill-sanctuary, some hundred and thirty feet high, is a containing wall. Four towers rise at the corners of four galleries communicating, by covered passages, with the central shrine. The towers and the galleries, with the porticoes which link them and the little courts which separate them, are built upon a square pediment or terrace some forty feet high and, at its base, about seven hundred and fifty feet square.[1]

The famed bas-reliefs in the galleries are in very low, smoothly executed and polished relief.

The subjects are taken from the epics of India, from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. There are scenes of the Last Judgment. Of the Hindus' heaven and hell. There is a magnificent review of troops, chariots, elephants and warriors before the Majesty of King Paramavishnuloka.[2]

Here is the Battle of Lanka, a furious *mêlée* where Hanuman, the warrior-king of the white monkeys and the demons of Ravana's host are shown interwined like lianas conjured into beasts.

The Churning of the Sea . . . a seven-headed serpent as a gigantic pestle to churn the sea in which writhe, or float dead, the beasts and the fishes, the great tortoise and the marine monsters . . . around the serpent's great length are warriors, and above in the heavens are

[1] The whole of Angkor Vat was cleared of jungle trees and repaired by the *Ecole Francaise d'Extrême Orient* about twenty years ago. From the upper storey alone were removed over fifty cubic metres of earth and two waggon-loads of roots. Special scissors three feet long had to be used to cut them.

[2] That is the posthumous 'glory' name of Suryavarman II, the builder of the temple.

divine dancers, as lithe and vivid and possessed as the frenzied crowds represented on the Eastern Spanish prehistoric rock-paintings. The Churning of the Sea is a hymn of glorification to divine order and the disciplined effort of men, such order and effort being symbolized by the troops of spirits and divine dancers snatching treasures from the foaming chaos. It is the image of man making his world by action, by the re-presentation of action and by words and their magic force. . . .

And the scenes of Heaven and Hell, and the flowers and trees and antic men . . . armies and processions of armed men and warriors, and a huge elephant rising above the crowd, his trunk curled and his tail held aloft. Upon the beast's back is the prince himself, erect, and hurling a lance at his cowering foes. The swirling, twirling combat of good and evil spirits, the cool march of elephants, horses and men, the naked divine dancers twisted and curled into movements more passionate than any posed by the Cambodian dancers of to-day.

And here is the Chariot of the Moon. Two full-faced horses—how difficult it is to make full-faced horses seem anything but laughable—trees and palms and adorers meekly kneeling upon their knees, and upon the Chariot, and framed within an aureole, a cross-legged figure—rather Tibetan-looking and majestuous.[1]

You can wander around outside the great enclosure and under the shade of the tall mango trees, whose glossy, thick-set foliage casts coolness and an odour of fresh turpentine . . . Here and there are the humble, impermanent huts of the monks . . . In a grove of slender trees whose roots are cultured with engraved or sculptured stones, is a gigantic, and modern, image of the Buddha, calm, gracious, eternal under a spindly canopy.

It is all very peaceful. No one, nothing, has ever shouted here . . . No passion nor violence. Still, on this very spot not so many decades ago was exquisitely tortured and bloodily massacred, the first curator of the ruins. The Cambodians thought him sacrilegious. The Buddhist precept not to kill faded and retreated before the enormity of his crime. And perhaps his death propitiated the spirits who live on as powerful and vindictive as ever—for men who are careless.

Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia.

[1] This is obviously not the place for a detailed guide-like description of the Khmer monuments, yard by yard. For further information the reader may turn to the bibliography and especially to the books of the late M. Victor Goloubew *Introduction à la Connaissance d'Anghor* and *Le Temple d'Anghor Vat*, published in Brussels and Paris by the *Editions Van Oest.*

Walk slowly along the paved path from the outer portal to the steep intricate mass of the temple-mountain. On either side are the oblong basins choked with lotuses both white and blue. A yellow bonze or two will be strolling bent on devotions. Here and there Chinese-manufactured incense-sticks curl into blue smoke before images of the Blessed One. . . .

A tattered beggar, clutching, as do beggars in all countries, his bundle of treasures—amulets and rubbish—is leaning nobly against a stone serpent, a royal *naga*. The man's face is fine and well-lined. His air graceful and imposing. A man of character. A pious mendicant of importance. A man of prudence and judgment, you can see, a man such as our masters should appear and so rarely do appear.

He is quite mad. He thinks he owns Angkor. And so he does because he thinks he does. Who can own anything? What can possession mean except that we be possessed with devils?

La folie c'est un refuge.

The Essence of Worship

In no essential detail did these great mortuary fanes of Cambodia differ from their Indian models. However vast the temple it is but an elaborate fruit containing and sheltering a simple kernel, the inner sanctuary or cell.

Despite their liking for lavish decoration and for architectural display, the Khmers never disobeyed the Indian prescriptions that the Divine Images should be placed in shelters of moderate size.

A simple, square *cella*, windowless and unadorned, is all that, from first to last, was ever enclosed by the humblest brick chapel or the most magnificent stone cathedral.

The archaic, magic rites must be performed in an archaic setting. Evil, in its most ancient and formidable form of dire ill-luck, is surely visited upon those who dare to sin. And sin is neglect to perform the rites in becoming and traditional manner.[1]

[1] The exploration, excavation and preservation of the Khmer monuments are all quite modern. In 1902 by the Franco-Siamese convention the provinces of M'lu Prei and of Tonlé Kepu (never effectively occupied by the Siamese) were retroceded to Cambodia. In 1904, by another convention, the port of Kest, the territories to the south thereof and the islands off the coast from the region of Lem-sing east were attributed to Cambodia. On 23rd March, 1907, in exchange for the regions of Dansai and Krat together with the islands (peopled by Siamese) the Bangkok government retroceded to Cambodia the provinces of Battambang, Siem-Reap and Sisophon, that is to say the area containing the principal Khmer ruins. In 1909, King Sisowath, in person took possession, with great ceremony, of Angkor. The systematic and scientific study and care of the monuments dates, therefore, from the first decade of this century.

A narrow corridor serves for the processions and circumambulations of the officiating priests. Before the cell is, generally, an antechamber, often a hypostyle hall, and this marks the limits none but priests may traverse. Near the shrine are erected flagmasts such as those we saw around the elegant stupa-temples of Phnompenh. The temple-grounds are enclosed with walls pierced by four (and sometimes five) gateways which, in southern Indian and in the Khmer monuments, are surmounted by immense towers. The structures are called *gopuram*, or ox-gates.

The daily service of the temple is a performance of royal honours chants, dances and offerings—to the god. The image, towards which the homage of the cult is directed, is conceived as being an incarnation, or manifestation, of the divinity. The image is not the God, but the image is instinct with the divinity of the god as long as the image serves the divine purpose. The people visit the temple, not to take part in the services but, as they say, to 'see' the god and to do him homage, and to receive the benediction he showers upon his faithful people when he is rightly, ritually and traditionally honoured. And, in ancient Cambodia, during the time of the *devaraja*, or Divine King cult, and, furthermore, during the prevalence of the Great Vehicle Lokeçvara cult, the King upon earth and the God in Heaven mingled their essences in the Sacred Phallus or in the image of the deity of Boundless Pity.

The Interlaced Serpents

Men's judgements are a parcel of their fortunes.
SHAKESPEARE

'The northern lake is five *li* north of the town. It contains a gilded tower which is square, and dozens of little houses in stone, also a gilt lion, a gilded Buddha, a bronze elephant, a bronze ox, a bronze horse. Nothing is lacking.' So wrote Chou Ta-kwan of the altogether delightful place now called Neak-Pean or the 'Intertwined Serpents.'[1]

[1] The 'Nirpone' of Farhaut (1874). 'Neak-Pean' is like almost all the names we apply to the Khmer ruins, a modern and a fanciful one. The old appellations have been long since forgotten and the few ancient names which have come down to us are by no means unobjectionably saddled on to a few monuments. Life had so completely left the cities of the Khmers that nothing clung to the ruins but vague, looming legends which took some form during the troubled Middle Ages of Cambodia. 'Baphuon,' 'Neak Pean,' and 'Banteai Srei' are as arbitrary as 'Lubaantun,' 'Uaxactun' or 'Menche' which latter names we apply to certain Maya ruins in Central America.

Neak-Pean resembles nothing so much as one of the artificial lakes of a French palace. The Khmer site reminds you at once of Versailles and of Fontainebleau. There is the same rich but not obtrusive wood fringing the lake. The whole thing is perfect in proportion and the man-made stonework seems a natural part of the landscape, which lends itself admirably to enhance the beauty and pleasure of the 'Intertwined Serpents.' For all we can see this great basin was a holy well, perhaps even a miraculous well like that of St. Winifred in North Wales where 'Baron Corvo' fell so foul of the Catholic incumbent Father Beauclerk. In any case, Neak-Pean was doubtless the scene of water-rituals, and the layout of the lake indicates that it was intended as a copy of the Sacred Lake Anavatapta, fabled to lie in inaccessible recesses of the Himalayas and from whose waters four mighty rivers take their source. So, probably, at Neak-Pean men washed themselves and rid themselves of their ills, both of the body and of the soul, while the Divine Pity of Avalokiteçvara, the deity of Boundless Light, was spread upon the worshippers.

The oval basin is bounded by a laterite wall and its waters at each of the cardinal points slip through great stone faces into rivulets carrying off the overflow while at each of the sluices rises a stone pavilion. These little structures command smaller, secondary basins fed through the stone faces, the first of a horse, the second of an elephant, the third of a lion and the fourth of a man whose great, grave spewing countenance shows an arching mouth, the Khmer smile rounded to a Khmer shout . . . splendid.

Neak-Pean appears to have been dedicated to Avalokiteçvara or Lokeçvara in his *avatar*, or incarnation, as Balaha, the Saviour-Horse, who, legend has it, rose from the waters before the steps of the little shrine on the central islet of the basin. This islet bore, until 1935, its *tempietto* strangled and embraced by a gigantic *fromager* (fig tree) whose saw-like, ridged, grey roots almost hid the sculpture of the sanctuary and of its pedestal adorned with lotus flowers and the two intertwined snakes (giving their name to the place) whose heads rise on the eastern side.

But this tree lent the whole islet and lake so singular a charm that when a great storm stripped and split the tree, there was a general cry of dismay that one of the most evocatory and romantic of the Khmer monuments was maimed and made commonplace. However, in 1938, M. Glaize, the conservator of Angkor, decided to remove the remains of the *fromager* and to reconstruct the graceful, little

sandstone shrine. Unfortunately, the basins fill up only during the rainy season, so then, when it is least convenient for the traveller to visit the place, then only, can you enjoy the full pleasure and edification of Neak-Pean.

The monument existed before the time of Jayavarman VII, whose main additions were the Lokeçvara panels at the openings on the north, the west and the south.

Omnia exeunt in mysterium.

More than eight hundred Khmer monuments have been discovered in the countryside of Cambodia. They vary in size from a city to a small sanctuary and they lie, for the most part, in the area between the Great Lake and the Kulen Hills to the north thereof, the area of which Angkor is the focal point.

In this dry jungle of Cambodia you can hardly escape the feeling that you are upon an island, so impressed on our imagination is the image of the South Seas. The palms, arecas, cocos and sugar palms, shoot up from glittering sand. The huts are high-perched on stilts. Though the vegetation is thick enough, it is composed of what they call 'secondary growth' and is very different from the fierce, impenetrable forests farther north. And there are no relics of death, no graves, no cemeteries, even the reliquaries seem but architectural ornaments.

The Mebon of the West

Like the men of Funan, so the Chinese chroniclers tell us, the Khmers were clever metal-founders and workers. There are, however, practically no small objects of Khmer art preserved. It is true that few systematic excavations at Angkor have been undertaken. But we have every reason to think that everything portable was pillaged and carried off in the past. All the millions of square feet of earth turned over during the reconstruction of the monuments have revealed very few objects in precious metals.

The Khmer bronzes are for the most part excellent examples of the *cire perdue* casting technique. There have survived besides sacred images, some ritual bells, elephant bells and 'conch-shells' for lustral water. The alloy used for these objects was known as *samrit* and it was composed of seven (or even nine) different metals, one of which was gold.

The bronze images of divinities are distinguished from the

sandstone statues which were their models by more slender proportions, and by an abundant richness of representations of jewels—bracelets, anklets, necklaces—all etched and chiselled with extreme delicacy. Sometimes these images have a strangely Tibetan look.

Although few large bronzes have been discovered in 1937 in the middle of the *baray*, or artificial lake, to the west of Angkor, were dug up the fragments of a gigantic recumbent image.

In the early days of that year, a Cambodian in obedience to the orders given to him by the Buddha in a dream, began to dig in the middle of the western lake until he came upon a large bronze head more than three feet below the surface of the earth. The man thereupon told M. Glaize of his find. He ordered a gang of workmen to continue to dig. They recovered the bust of the statue, fragments of the legs, a double arm one of whose hands supported the head. The whole thing, which you may now see at Angkor, is a most imposing statue and doubtless represents a *Vishnu narayana*, or reclining Vishnu, the patron deity of Angkor Vat. It is quite the largest Khmer bronze yet recovered and it helps to fill out in our imagination, these endless temples, halls and galleries which seem so empty and severe. The great, grave, languid, divine head of the Vishnu is very Indian and timeless. . . .

Banteay Srei

For Banteay Srei we had the luck of having M. Maurice Glaize, the Keeper of the Ruins of the Park of Angkor, as guide, and the company of Baron, let us say, Korvin, a Hungarian magnate whose banking forbears had shed their patronymic of Schmuckstein, for a Magyar name when His late Apostolic Majesty Ferenc Joszef I had conferred upon them the honour of a Hungarian title.

Korvin, one of those shambling, elephantine men who seem rather flabby and inconsequent until you have been with them a little, was a collector of real erudition and, what was more, of immediate appreciation of what was valuable and what was not in the things we saw. For, of course, not all the Khmer things are of equal spiritual or æsthetic worth. The old Cambodians turned out plenty of shoddy and mechanical stuff. And then, in Cambodia, as elsewhere, the man who is not sure of his own opinion is not a little baffled. For the fact that a statue, a carving, a frieze or a bas-relief has survived almost intact, is no guarantee that it is significant or edifying for us. Destruction has fallen upon just and unjust alike. What has survived has survived by chance. There has been no selection here, as there is

so often in countries where objects have been treasured for their supposed magical or religious value, or even, one is inclined to think, for their æsthetic importance, though, in past times, few would ever admit that a thing was cherished just for itself alone. The art of the collector and of the connoisseur is a modern one, or, at least, let us say, it flourishes only in periods of artistic decline when men tend to look backwards and when they have lost their old attitude of religious respect for a work of art. Since all art, as far as we can see, is, in its origin, religious.

'Art,' said an eminent French painter of our own times, 'is anarchy.' By which he meant, no doubt, that a work of art is the revelation of one man's soul and attitude, while that work of art will be for each observer something peculiar to himself.

So, we may find any work of art incongruous.

It is the incongruous that makes us laugh, but as we are never quite sure for long what is incongruous for us, we laugh much more at other men's astonishment at what they find incongruous at a given time and in certain circumstances.

When super-realism was still a novelty, years ago now, the *Vieux Colombier* theatre used to be let out for shows of the most varied sort. One day a large audience had gathered in the hope of hearing a Catholic propagandist, Mme. Marie Gasquet, deliver a lecture on the virtues of the boy scout movement. The hall was filled with old maids, spotty youths, retired colonels and other serious-minded and public-spirited people all eager to hear the good word. The curtain went up and disclosed, in the shadow of a gigantic phallus realistically painted, M. Salvador Dali seated and taking a footbath in a large bowl of milk. After he had let drop some choice aphorisms of a highly blasphemous, sexual and homosexual nature, a young woman partly dressed as a Red Cross nurse tripped on to the stage and deftly upset an *omelette aux fines herbes* over the master's head.

It took quite a long time for the management to explain to the audience that there had been a mistake in dates.

Un homme est plus signifié par sa valeur que par ses secrets.

André Malraux

A writer, who has now become for some of the French 'intellectuals' a prophet of the first class and significance, began his adventures in Indo-China whither he was sent by a German antique dealer to bring back any carvings, statues and 'curios' he might be able to pick up in the Cambodian jungles.

That was in 1923. The good old days were over. Ten years earlier anyone could pick up, pocket and take away—if he could manage to move it—anything which caught his fancy. You could wander through the forest and dig up bronzes, you could hack off heads of statues, you could do just what you liked. The province of Siem-Réap was a no-man's-land and none cared about antique odds and ends. But our author came a little late. He made his way to Banteay-Srei, pulled out and crated some of the best sculptures and made his way with them to the Siamese frontier, where, for some reason or another, probably lack of cash to bribe the frontier guards and customs, he was forced to leave his booty. He then retreated to Saigon but was arrested on board his ship at the demand of the Cambodian authorities, taken back to Phnompenh and sentenced to three years imprisonment. But his friends in France and a number of writers took up his cause. He was placed under house-arrest and then finally pardoned.

All of which story may be a lesson to us not to attempt the picking up of unconsidered trifles in Cambodia, for we are not likely to get illustrious French writers to plead our cause. If we really have to bring back something (which can be better, cheaper and more comfortably bought in Paris) we have a choice of odd pieces which are for sale at the house of the keeper, M. Glaize. . . .

The group of Shivaite sanctuaries which the modern Cambodians call Banteay Srei, lies enclosed in jungle and some twenty-two miles to the north-east of Angkor Vat. The trip is only possible in the dry season—the elaborate drainage works, canals, dykes and sluices of the Khmers have long since perished—and even before the rains fall, the sandy tracks are full of potholes where you may crack the spring-plates of the best-slung car.

You swing and sway and crunch farther and farther into the realm of trees. The jungle dwellers, perched at the top of their front-door ladders, stare with amazement.

. . . .Then, when you have settled down to a day of Oceania, and are surprised only by the monkeys (for few other beasts will you see unless you go hunting and not always then), suddenly either the jungle breaks to a clearing revealing some huge, imperishable building, so immense as to dwarf you, or, rather slowly, you perceive still clutched and clawed and tangled by the great trees and merging into the green haze, a temple or a tower or a shrine magnified by its monstrous growth of living limbs and branches.

It is like finding medieval India in Samoa. . . .

Most of the Khmer monuments are of a dull elephant-grey blotched with huge splashes of back lichen. The colour of the ruins is for all the world that of the old Irish castles of the west. The coloured pictures of the Cambodian palaces and temples lend far too vivid a tint to the stones which are, indeed, best seen, or at least, best admired, by brilliant moonlight.

But the shrines of Banteay Srei are pink. They are rosy jewels, unique in Cambodia. In their casket of forest they are startling.

The sanctuaries are on a small scale. In fact, so low, that you must bend to enter some of the portals. But so perfect, so cunning and so glorious are the harmony and proportion that Banteay will strike you as more imposing than almost any other man-made thing you will see in Cambodia. For one visitor and pilgrim, at least, Banteay Srei is the culmination of a Cambodian journey. The vision of these shrines is one haunting my visual memory at times of depression and of exultation. The picture I possess within myself of Banteay Srei is among the few I hope I shall carry, undimmed, with me into the shades.

What we call 'Banteay Srei' seems (if we read the texts aright) to have borne the name of *Içvarapura*, that is, the City of the Lord (Shiva). And we know when the fashioning and creation of Içvarapura were accomplished. The foundation and consecration stone was unearthed during the '30's of this century and it bears a date corresponding to A.D. 967. Thus was confirmed the classification of the monument as proposed by MM. Philippe Stern and Victor Goloubew. Banteay Srei was 'discovered' only in 1914 and was, at first, considered to be a building of the Khmer decline or post-classical period. But, since the glorious epoch of Khmer architecture hardly opened before the reign of King Rajendravarman in 944, Banteay Srei is one of the earliest as well as one of the most precious of Khmer legacies.

Banteay-Srei is now world famous for its admirable carvings in high relief. There are scenes from legend. There are pediments and portals whose exuberant decoration is mainly ornamental. Many of the details in their sharpness, their crispness and their delicacy, remind you of chiselled bronze. It is difficult to believe that such definition and clarity can have survived for nearly one thousand years. And the shrines are carved in sandstone.

It is here that we have for the first time in Cambodia scenes with bas-relief figures decorating the pediments above the doors. In its superb carving and sculpture old Içvarapura rivals

anything in Mother India. But although the design and plan are wholly Indian, the spirit of the place is the spirit of the more alien world of Indonesia.[1]

The main entrance of the inner shrine has a lintel which, despite its Indian decoration and its classical type reminds you of the wooden carved door-tops and barge-boards of Dyak huts in Borneo. An ancient 'Indonesian' building tradition lies behind the Indian models in the land of the Khmers. But classical Khmer architecture shares with that of medieval India two vices. There was both in India and in Cambodia what the French call *l'horreur du vide* which leads to masses of meaningless ornamentation such as disfigures the monuments of later India. And the arch was unknown. This, the greatest of Persian inventions, was fully exploited by the Chinese, but little used by the Indians until periods later than those which influenced the old Khmers. It may well be that the arch was felt to be in some way a detestable modern invention and, as such, unsuited for use in the service of the gods, whose habitations, shrines and sanctuaries must follow the antique models.

In any case, the corbelled roof—exclusively used in Cambodia—dictates long, narrow rooms and demands disproportionately thick supporting walls but such an arrangement mattered little in constructions of the Khmer temple type, for the imposing mass, however great, was designed to contain but one or two simple cells or 'shelters' for the deities. In old Cambodia, however, despite the Indian canons of over-decoration, the Khmer architecture sometimes achieved a purity of line and conception together with a sober subordination of decoration to design which is most satisfying and comparatively rare in India itself. Unlike the often exuberant and erotic fantasies of Indian sculpture, Khmer carvings seem curiously chaste and unpassionate. And the everyday life of centuries back is portrayed for us as never in India and reminds us of the delicate pictures in Egyptian tombs.

But of Khmer sculpture as a whole one is forced to more reserve of approval. The ancient Cambodians often attained a singular beauty and spirituality of expression in their heads and there are few things more evocatory and exciting in all the realm of glyptic art than stone faces, mysterious with the 'Khmer smile' and closed or half-closed eyes. These are precious possessions. But even this type

[1] We can admire a piece of Banteay Srei nearer at home. The *Musée Guimet* (now the principal French museum for Far Eastern art) in Paris possesses, as one of its main treasures, one of the pediments which could not be replaced when the anastylosis of the shrines was undertaken.

was mass-produced and there is a great deal of difference between the worth of some statues and others, even of the same period.

But the Khmer sculptors were fundamentally clumsy in their representation of the human figure in the round. Indeed, for all its opulence Khmer sculpture is inferior to that of the Chams at their best.

Again, Borobudur, as a piece of architecture, cannot be mentioned in the same breath with Angkor. But the high relief sculpture of the great Javanese monument is more vigorous, more vivid, more living, and even more splendid, than that of the Khmers.

We should, most probably, err, if we were to conceive the ancient Khmer sculptors as creative artists in our sense of the term. In Indian tradition as received, if not wholly observed, by the old Cambodians, the maker of holy things, of sacred images and statues, is a craftsman whose job is to reproduce (of course, in the spirit of his age) figures whose function is to inspire the worshipper with thoughts whereby he may become identified with his God. For the sculpture which we may call almost purely decorative—that is, the carving adorning the outside of buildings or the low reliefs of the galleries—we may remember that much of it was no doubt executed in haste and, moreover, that it was all painted and gilded and glowing with colour and movement. What we see to-day are the bones deprived of their flesh—or, at the best, a mummy, lifeless if preserving the form it had in life.

It is as great builders and great monumental masons that the old Khmers leave us wondering to-day.

Alone, in its setting of forest, Banteay Srei glows cool under the heat. Great butterflies like black velvet swoop and flutter about the shrines.

After a day with this marvel, so far from men that you can often hear and glimpse the herds of elephant crashing carefully through the jungle, as we moved away and daylight began to fail and the shrines shrank into their groves, a great flock of emerald parrots shot through the sky, turned and whirled and settled on the eaves, the corbels and the lintels of the sanctuary—brilliant, scintillating jewels.

And then we ate in the jungle and we drank iced champagne, good champagne, for champagne was both good and cheap in Indo-China. You could get a bottle of Charles Heidsieck for six piastres (sixty francs), or, in the days before the last war, about seven shillings and sixpence.

And how did we drink it iced in the heart of the Angkorian forest? We did not carry an ice-box with us. No, we just shoved the two bottles into a pail, filled up the pail with petrol, let the fly-wheel of the car rip and put the bucket next to the wheel until the petrol was all evaporated and the bottles were frozen so that the wine chinked and tinkled with ice-chips . . . And we did not spill a drop. Nice, old corks coming out as compact and smooth and polished as a piece of jade[1]. . . .

On our way back to Siem-Réap we stepped aside to one or two less significant places. At one was a most lively scene of anastylosis. The jungle had been cleared. The temples had been taken to pieces. And there, sweating in the shade, naked but for loin-cloths, were scores of Cambodian workmen fitting the blocks together, remaking a Khmer temple as their ancestors had originally made it centuries ago. Up and up the walls rose, the sculptured scenes restored under our eyes. . . .

Korvin took some nice colour-shots with his movie-camera and posted the spools off to Rochester, N.Y., as soon as we got back to the town of the 'Vanquished Siamese' . . . I dined that evening in the pretentious splendour of the Grand Hotel d'Angkor—no better than at my more humble inn. . . .

'I shall not have the spools sent back to Hungary. Indeed, when I left Budapest at the end of 1938 I decided to take a long trip through India and Indo-China and Indonesia, following the tracks of the Indian expansion . . . I think I shall cross the Pacific to the United States and stop there for some time, perhaps a good long time . . . after all, I've only got my son to keep me in Europe and he's at Harrow, but on holiday in New York. . . .

Note:

I have not attempted in this book to give any sort of exhaustive, or even cursory, account of all the Khmer monuments. I have touched upon some I have myself seen and visited which are also, many would agree, the more significant of the ancient buildings. In the appended bibliography will be found mentioned works in which may be found a great deal of detailed information concerning nearly all the Khmers remains.

[1] Hold the bottles at an angle of forty-five degrees as you draw the cork and you will not scatter a drop of the wine—of course, wine-waiters will never hold their bottles thus—they calculate that the more they spill on the floor, the more pleased will be the poor boobs trying to look like wine-connoisseurs—also, the sooner the said boobs will call for another bottle.

The nine main clusters or groups of Khmer buildings are as follows:

(a) Angkor.

(b) Banteay-Chhmar (about eighty miles to the north-west of Angkor).

(c) Prah-Vihear (about ninety miles to the north-east of Angkor).

(d) Koh-Ker (about sixty miles to the north-east of Angkor).

(e) Prah-Khan (about eighty miles to the east of Angkor).

(f) Beng-Mealea (about twenty-five miles to the east of Angkor).

(g) Vat-Nokor (about fifty-five miles to the north-east of Phnompenh).

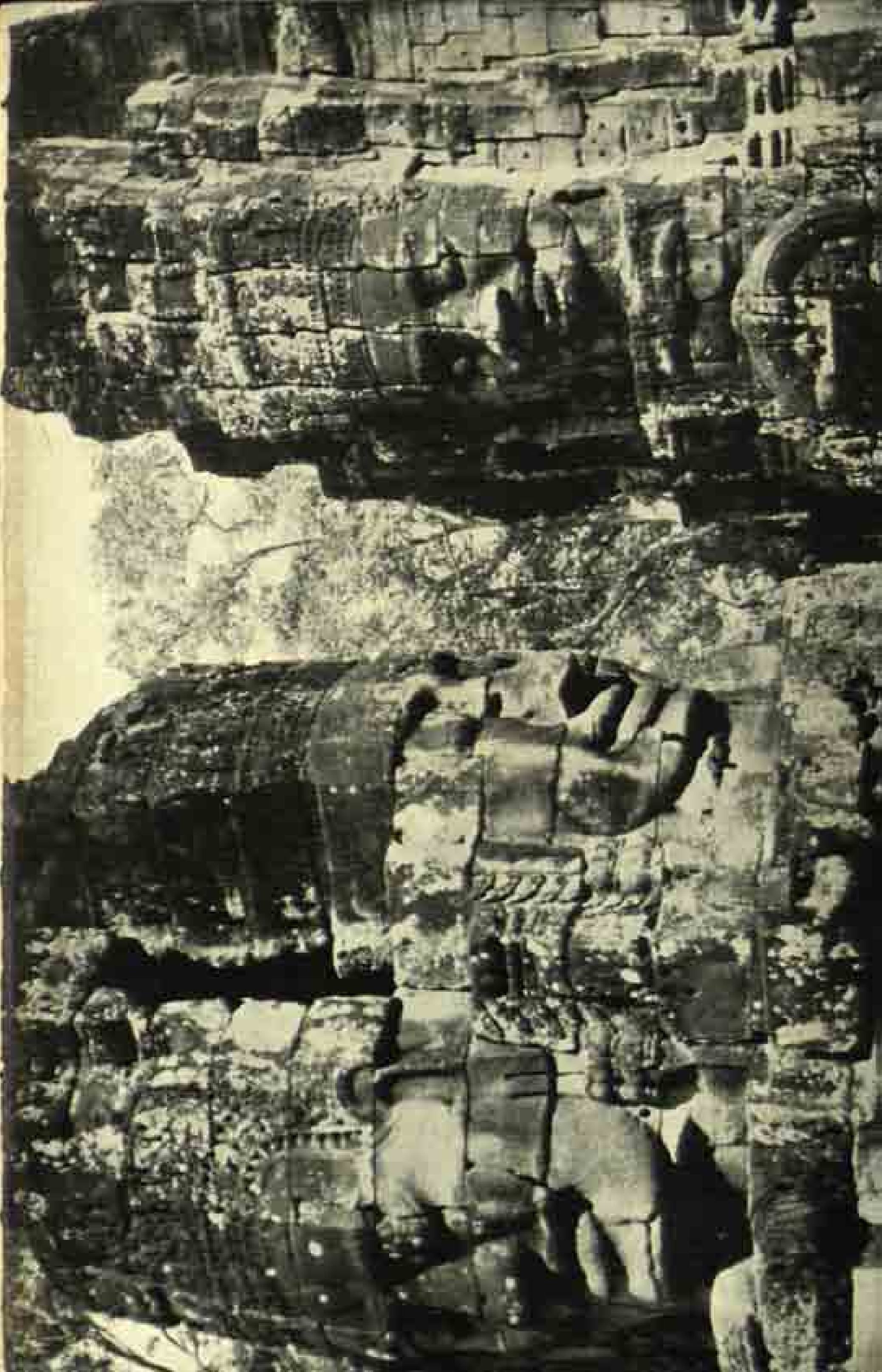
(i) Phnom-Chisor (about thirty-five miles to the south of Phnompenh).

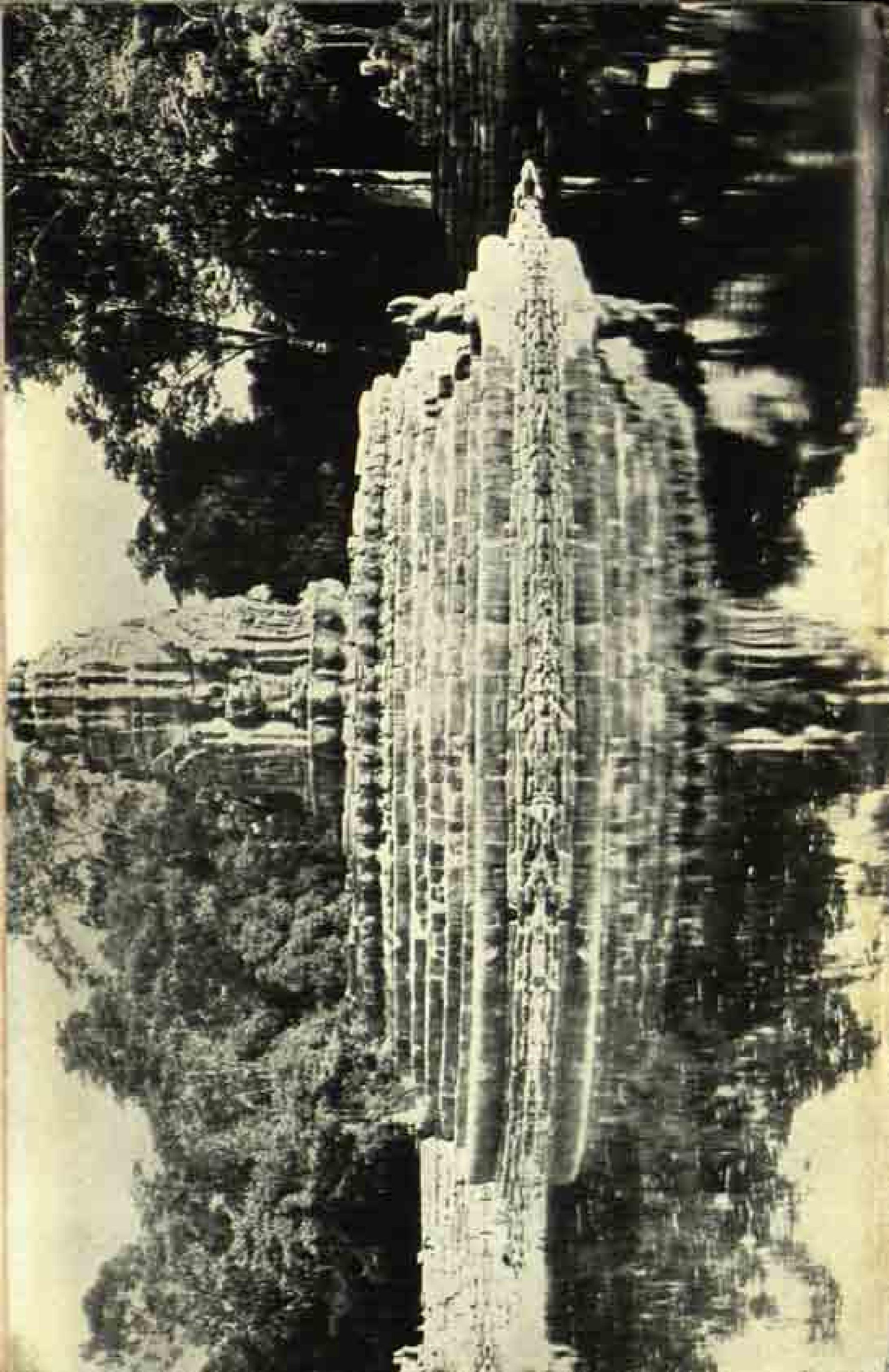
By no means are all these centres equally accessible. Most of the monuments in the Angkor region can now be visited even during the rains (though the trip is fatiguing), but you cannot get to the Kulen Hills or to Banteay Srei during the wet season. Others, such as Banteay-Chhmar are difficult of access at all times of the year. In any case, few travellers unless unable to view the monuments at any other season, would choose to push through the Cambodian jungle or even drive through the Cambodian Plain while the rains were on.

Visitors to Angkor should not fail, if at all possible, to drive through to Beng-Mealea (whose monuments are in a very ruinous condition) to Koh-Ker and thence to Prah-Vihear, about two thousand two hundred feet up on a spur of the Dangrek Hills, that was conceived as marking the centre or navel of the Khmer realm.

Banteay Kedei (the 'Fortress of the Cells'), a monument within easy distance of Angkor, was a foundation of Rajendravarman II in the tenth century. There are twelfth- and thirteenth-century inscriptions both Buddhist and Shivaite. Ta Prohm (i.e. 'The Ancestor Brahma') near Banteay Kedei is a tenth-century monument with thirteenth-century additions. The shrine was first dedicated to the Buddha and then changed over to Shivaite worship. Under Suryavarman the temple was re-dedicated to Buddhist worship. An inscription gives details of the shrine, its services and its servers in the days of its glory. There were eighteen principal officiants and two thousand seven hundred and forty subordinate officiants. Twelve thousand six hundred and forty people had the right to lodge within the temple precincts. Six hundred and fifteen singers were attached to the sanctuary which possessed an imposing treasure of silver and gold, thirty-five diamonds, two fans adorned

Angkor Thom: The Many-Faced Pinnacles of the Bayon (p. 165)





with pearls, forty thousand six hundred and twenty pearls, four thousand five hundred and fifty precious stones, one cauldron of gold and numerous copper utensils.

It is clear, even if there was a little boasting and exaggeration in this enumeration, that comparable riches in a provincial temple indicated that the Khmers were drawing on the tribute and the labour of numerous subject peoples. It is wonderful what a lot of booty can be gathered together in one place if a large enough territory of slaves is held to ransom.

In one of the eastern galleries of Ta Prohm is a stela over six feet high bearing an inscription dated 1186, that is, during the reign of Jayavarman VII. In the document is set forth the king's genealogy and a recital of his works and deeds (including his vast building operations) together with a detailed description of the organisation, plan and daily ritual of a Khmer Mahāyānist temple nearly eight hundred years ago.

The Fading of the Khmers

The Khmer people broke under the burden of imperial glory. All slave-drivers and masters tend to think that what men have tolerated for long they will support for ever. But, sometimes, before revolt, comes collapse. Even in the time of Chou Ta-Kwan when the Khmer realm still seemed strong and prosperous, the intelligent Chinese perceived that war with Siam had sapped and was still sapping the fabric of the State. The equilibrium of empire is ever delicate, for it depends upon the health of the controlling centre. And often the luck which leads a people to empire is not accompanied by much of the real power necessary to maintain empire in the face of determined assault.

So it was with the Khmers. We are often told that it was the immense riches of the temples and palaces that attracted the Siamese invaders. Perhaps we should say rather that it was hope of immense riches which beckoned the Thais. It may be that towards the end the Khmers did not put up much of a fight. The economic basis of their realm had been rotted and the food supply must have begun to fail. The peoples of monsoon Asia lived, as they live, on rice, and rice cultivation needs peace and a government which governs. If there is war and disorder, men burn the forests and grow mountain rice. . . .

The conquering Siamese brought with them Little Vehicle Buddhism, a religion of resignation, or, let us say, a religion offering

Neak Pean: The Sacred Pool (*p.* 183)

an excuse for inaction among a vanquished people. It may be that the Siamese took over by remote control. Their Little Vehicle fifth columnists sapped the foundations of the Khmer State. The causes of profound social change are manifold—disease, war, foolish government, financial chaos and what we will—but the New Idea may make permanent a state of things which might otherwise have been but transitory.

The Khmers got their New Idea and became Cambodians. . . .

CHAPTER IV

The Lost Stick

When forced to flee to Siam before the Annamese invaders, King Ang-Eng, in 1794, granted the whole of the province of Battambang (the most westerly of his dominions and one whereinto, as yet, the pushing Annamese had not pushed) as a fief to his faithful follower in exile, the mandarin Ben.

The King's will and pleasure was to secure some part of his realm by placing it directly under Siamese protection, since Ben could not go back into Cambodia proper, for there he would have been executed as a partisan of the exiled monarch. Ben, in fact, decided to go Siamese.

And Ben's descendants as dynasts, ruled Battambang, until in 1907 (when the Siamese were forced to retrocede the region to Cambodia) the last representative of the family, Phya Kathathon, had to relinquish his rights, lose his patrimony and retire, as a much-wronged man, to Bangkok. I do not know whether the Siamese righted the wrong when they occupied Battambang again in 1941, certainly Phya Kathathon's grandson was pushing his claims.

We may note the play of names. The original hanger-on of King Ang-Eng bears the good old sturdy Cambodian name of Ben. His descendant, a hundred and fifty years later, is known by a typically Siamese appellation—Phya Kathathon. When did the 'Fitz-Ben' family become Siamese and cease to be Cambodian?

Presumably very soon indeed. Old Ben's descendants in second degree were probably as Siamese as the Siamese royal family which, rumour says, was founded by a Chinese. And yet, if we were considering analogous cases in Europe we should be told that 'blood will tell' and so forth. Only the other day, an intelligent man mentioned to me that he could not understand how his chief (an Englishman) was so anti-French, since the fellow was 'of French origin.' I thought he meant that the said chief had been naturalized or that, at least, it was his father or mother who had been French. Not at all. Our 'French origin' was reported (and how improbably) to go back over three hundred years! The man (who bears one of those common, neutral English or French names such as Champion, Godard or

Barret) ought to have been 'pro-French' because he and his relations claim that their forbears were French three hundred years ago. From 1647, Champion, Esq.'s, 'ancestors' have been burrowing under the more obscure strata of the English population, marrying women from this land, and emerging about three or four generations ago by the not unusual evolution of peasant, tradesman, parson, 'public schoolboy,' 'gentleman,' to the present-day respectability of boss, half-commission man, ex-officer, and something in the City. And even were Champion, Esq., to bear, in his body, some of the chromosomal inheritance from his putative 'Huguenot ancestor' (exiled, of course, for religious persecution, never for having raped his master's daughter, stolen six *écus* from the parish priest or said loudly, when drunk, that Louis XIV, King of France and Navarre, was a bastard and his mother a whore) even if this most improbable chromosomal inheritance was borne in the fellow's body, why, should such an inheritance make him 'pro-French?'

But we need not suppose that the dynasts of old Ben's stock ever heard their slaves, toadies and loyal followers express wonder that Phya Kathathon was, although of Cambodian origin, so anti-Cambodian. They knew why he was. The damned Cambodians (and their French bosses) had stolen his fief and property. *La propriété, c'est le vol* and the history of all states is one of consistent swindling of the public by currency devaluation and by confiscation. But we must never imitate the acts of our masters. One only must play at this game . . . it's a sort of patience, you see.

Although, as the crow flies, Battambang (that is *Bat Dambang*, or the 'Lost Stick') is not more than sixty miles south-west of Siem-Réap, you must push westwards as far as Sisophon and then double sharply backwards to the south-east, unless you are prepared to follow the fair-weather tracks across the flood area of the Great Lake.

The province of Battambang is the great rice-granary of Cambodia, it is, indeed, a land of rice-fields, criss-crossed with streams and canals and brooks whose fertile banks are planted as *chamcars*, as were those of the Old Man of the Sweet Cucumbers (see p. 240). The Cambodians lost Battambang again from 1941 to 1945 and their whole economy was, by this loss, rather severely affected. The province has about three hundred thousand inhabitants of whom over a quarter of a million are Cambodians while the rest are Chinese and Annamese. There are, to all intents and purposes, no Siamese at all in Battambang. Battambang town, on the banks of the

Stung Sangke, a stream flowing from the Cardomom Mountains across the plain and into the Great Lake, is a rather pleasing place. Its buildings are interspersed with the greenery and palms and thick shrubs around the many monasteries and temples. Almost all the pagodas are modern.

The most interesting is the Vat Poveal and it is well worth a visit, most of all because it is one of the very few temples one can visit without a special (and parsimoniously granted) permit. It houses a school of Pali, a rich library and, above all, a museum of Khmer sculpture with some significant and important pieces discovered in the western Cambodian region.

The Battambang area was, indeed, during the old Khmer Empire, a thickly populated and fertile and productive province—as the abundance of monuments shows. About five miles to the north of the town is the Vat-Ek ('First Monastery') built in the eleventh century as a Hinduist temple and furnished in 1067 with a *lingam* of the God Shiva. The place is of considerable height and the excellent sculpture bears the imprint of one of the Khmer artists' peak periods. Ten miles to the east of the town (and accessible only in the dry season) is the Vat-Baset, much ruined and pillaged for building-stone, but still noble. Farther south, at Banon, is a miniature Angkor-Vat perched upon the summit of a two hundred and fifty foot knoll above the Stung-Sangke river. Moreover, in Battambang province was set up in 1067, at Prasat Prah Kset, a Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva group. This is the oldest specimen of such a synthesis (of direct Indian origin) which we have yet found on Cambodian soil.

Inside the town, the Vat Damrei Ser (Monastery of the White Elephant) is rather curious, but the edifice is more Siamese than Cambodian in style.

Battambang province furnished a powerful family to the old Khmer realm, since the Çrivakaivalya, hereditary high priests from 802 until 1052 of the *Devaraja*, or Divine King cult, were men of the Battambang region. These Çrivakaivalya were, for two hundred and fifty years, the real patriarchs, popes and spiritual princes of the Empire. Great men, sage in counsel and sacrosanct. As long as the Khmer Empire held together and the slaves slaved and the tribute came in, then the Çrivakaivalya had only to look noble, sage and imposing, had only to draw their fat salaries and perform the protecting, salving rites, and all was well. . . .

In the centre of Battambang town is a covered market, looking uncommonly like the old railway station at Calais. There is also a

real railway station. A most unexpected and improbable thing in these parts. Battambang is on the Phnompenh-Sisophon line. The trains take about seven hours to cover the hundred and thirty miles between Battambang and the capital. That is to say, the express trains do. The ordinary trains do not rush along at such a breakneck speed—one has plenty of time to admire and appreciate the Cambodian countryside.

Cambodian scenes so often reminding you of other lands but yet always peculiarly Cambodian, wrapt in an atmosphere that's dream-like because like the stuff your dreams melt into when you try to define them: incoherent, yet presenting a whole which is part and parcel of your being. Cambodia becomes part of yourself and you part of Cambodia. It is offered to you without insistence, even with diffidence, but irresistibly. . . .

The sheltering fig trees, broad and ribbed at the base and shooting up into a green blaze over the village temple, whose accompanying cluster of spired-top-like stupas seem ready to spurt golden flames rivalling those of the trees. And the curling, living finials of the roofs—elephantine, serpentine, sinuous, aspiring. . . .

The creaking, two-wheeled bullock carts, balanced as skilfully as Paris ice-wagons, swaying and somehow delicate in their cumbersomeness . . . the high-perched, flimsy, long, low huts with water below and water beyond, real lake-dwellings for a New Stone Age people . . . and what is civilization? The Cambodians are civilized enough, yet the mass of them lives the material life of the days before wheels and writing and priest-kings and book-keeping were invented by the cunning fellows of the Near East, who had found that you can get food to eat without tilling the soil and merely by talking. Merely? Well, talking is work. . . .

And golden divine princesses under parasols as thick and as spreading as those in the Ritz garden, and divine dancers in the flesh and carved as caryatids who with two fingers support heavy lintels . . . and the smooth-boled trees whose branches are curved as artfully as those in Chinese paintings, and the swelling, juicy, heart-shaped, jade-green leaves, so large and so disproportionate to their twigs—they are not just full-grown trees, they are Japanese dwarfed trees, magnified, but keeping in their enlargement their strange relation of leaf to branch . . . and, sometimes, the lattice of foliage and flower and fane is spread so delicate and decorative that when the sky is white at dawn or evening, you have before you a great Chinese wall-painting, gay, luminous, reassuring. . . .

And the large leaves merge into the fans they use for ceremony, fans embroidered with the two superimposed squares, so devised that they offer the plan and image of the world-mountain—a decoration so simple and inevitable that you care to think the sacred fig leaves all bear, if you look for it, such a pattern, just as the hyacinth offers you the AI of woe or the olive presents the Name of Allah upon each of her silvered leaves. . . .

And the innumerable parallels and analogies and echoes in the man-made things. Those Khmer columns ringed at close intervals with fat annulets . . . you see them again in Portugal, in Spain, and in the colonial houses of Venezuela . . . and the divine dancers of the monuments, dancers whose spiky diadem might be of aloes and whose nonchalant pendants lend their whole headdress an air of the plumed tiaras of *America* in the old tapestries or the antique maps. . . .

On the Cambodian plain the streams (and the mighty Mekong itself) run between alluvial dykes, which, at the time of low waters, rise up to twenty or thirty feet above the surface of the current. Beyond and below these dykes stretch the depressions or *beng*, watered by natural or artificial canals known as *prek* communicating with the rivers. Each year the flood waters gurgle through the *prek* and spill on to the *beng*, a life-giving layer of mud. When the waters begin to drop, the edges of the dykes are sown with what the Cambodians call *chamkar* plants, e.g., maize, cotton, tobacco, vegetables and soft fruits af all sorts.

When the waters have quite receded rice is planted in the *beng*.

There is nothing permanent about this countryside. The human habitations are of planted bamboo with palm-leaf roofs. Clumps of sugar-palms, like gigantic Hock bottles, dot the plain. The hamlets are lost in groves of gleaming palms, arecas, kapoks and the coco with its drooping crown of plumes . . . as you fly westwards over this part of Cambodia the land seems a patched garment sewn here and there with tabs of sober tartan, the greens, the browns and the yellows of cotton, maize and tobacco, indigo and mulberries . . . Once across the border and into Siam, the whole country soon appears spread with a kilt—of one of the less flashy sort. Lower Siam is one immense rice-field.

The Land of the Thais

The Phnompenh-Battambang railway goes on as far as Sisophon, where you can double back towards Siem-R'ap to the right or go straight on by road as far as the Siamese frontier at Aranya-Pradhet,

where is the terminus of the Siamese line by which you can reach Bangkok in a gritty, slow-moving train taking some eight hours to do the one hundred and fifty miles run. Everyone who goes to Cambodia should push on to Siam for a short stay, since, in that country, much he has seen in Cambodia will be illuminated.

Siam shows us none of the things we usually associate with its name. No Siamese cats and still less, of course, any Siamese twins. The 'white' elephants, sacred because of the dream which visited the Buddha's mother when she was pregnant, are a dirty grey or pink. Care is taken not to discover too many since they are an expense to move and a curse to keep. In fact, white elephants are as unpopular in Siam as with us.

Siam is a country about the size of France and it still has very few roads and many of these are impassable in the wet weather.[1] You can use a car in Bangkok and for a few miles out into the country but almost nowhere else, unless you want to break your springs or sink into slush. There are only four main railway lines and they all converge upon Bangkok. Travelling is thus an adventure, as it used to be in Indo-China a generation ago when Henri Mouhot took three days in a boat to cross the Tonlé Sap. Nine-tenths of the country is never visited by foreigners, or, indeed, by the urban Siamese. The whole land is, archæologically speaking, almost virgin soil, though we know that most of the caves, caverns and grottoes which might have given up priceless evidence of early man and his works, have been cleared and cleaned out and transformed into Buddhist shrines.

The Siamese are, also, in a minority in their own land, the majority of whose population is made up of Shans, Laotians, Malays and other peoples. Moreover, what the Siamese nationalists are pleased to call ancient Siamese art, is not Siamese at all, but the work (as far as the southern part of the country is concerned) of the peoples of the antique realms of Dvaravati, Ligor and the rest.

All this does not mean that Siam, the only country between Persia and China which managed to preserve its political independence during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of European imperialism, is not a very interesting place and that its people are not of charming manners and comportment. But it does mean that, in regard to Cambodia, we have to get Siam into its right perspective.

[1] For years the Siamese government built no roads. As considerable sums had been expended on the construction of the State railways it was felt that people ought to use them to the full.

The sea unites. The land divides.

And particularly is this true of Asia. That continent is a roof sloping northwards to the cold and tundra and southwards broken by gables into compartments between which communication by land is not easy. On the other hand, the southern shores of Asia are broken with good harbours and washed by seas whose navigation for much of the year is easy and commodious.

Not only did Indian influences penetrate by the overland route through Burma, southern Siam and Cambodia, but Western influences reached India and Farther India earlier than is generally recognized. Early in the first century of our era, traders from the Mediterranean had rounded Cape Comorin and touched down on the Coromandel coast. Just before the last war an elegant ivory statuette of the Goddess Lakshmi was unearthed in a house at Pompeii. Three Indian embassies were received by Augustus, and a mission from Ceylon appeared at the court of Claudius. Tamil poems tell of immigrants from *Yavana*[1], and southern India was penetrated by Italian and Mediterranean smiths, metal workers, carpenters, craftsmen and architects, just as Farther India was full of Indians.

At Pong Tük, in southern Siam, has been unearthed a Graeco-Roman lamp, while coins of the Antonines have been dug up at Long Xuyen in Cochin-China. The world was not so very big, even two thousand years ago.

The contact established between the Mediterranean world and the East after Alexander's campaigns, the foundation, in India, of Asoka's empire and of the later empire of Kanishka, the arising, in the west, of the Seleucid and Roman empires, gave to commerce in luxury goods a development deplored by Latin moralist writers in the first century of our era.

Gold, spices, sandal-wood, lign aloes, camphor and benzoin. were reckoned among the products of the lands beyond the Ganges.[2]

Coedès would have it that the supremacy of Funan is linked with the troubled period of the Chinese six dynasties, that the maritime power of Çrivijaya[3] developed as China weakened at the end of the T'ang dynasty and under the confusion of the five dynasties. The rise of the Khmer, Cham and early Burmese States, Coedès would

[1] That is the Roman dominions.
[2] Coedès.
[3] The Malayan Buddhist State whose existence was revealed by Coedès, though the extent of its realm and the identification of its rulers are controversial matters.

associate with the decline of China under the later Sungs in the eleventh century.

The Mongol conquests in Kublai Khan's reign would have definitely smashed Çrivijaya. So the Thais were freed for invasions down the Malay Peninsula, which invasions facilitated the adventure of Majapahit, conqueror of the island of Sumatra and of Malaya, south of the Siamese annexations.

The Thai (and the allied Lao) tribes seem to have begun their migration southwards from what is now south-western China, some time about 100 B.C.

We may take it that the Thai tribes when they set forth from the general Yünnan area were barbarians (the flourishing Thai principality in Yünnan seems to be a much later thing) who received the elements of civilization through contact with the Khmers.[1]

The immigrant Thai-speaking tribes began to press on to the Khmer empire from the north about the tenth century of our era. But the vassal Thais did not gain their independence until about 1237 A.D. After they had dealt a death-blow to their suzerains, the Thais pushed on towards the rich alluvial plains of the Menam river which were to be thenceforth the centre of their kingdom and of their attempts at empire.

When the Thais first came into contact with the Khmers, they found a religion which was a mixture of Great Vehicle Buddhism and of Brahmanism. Neither the Khmers nor the Siamese were wholly converted to Sinhalese Little Vehicle until the fifteenth century.[2] No doubt, the Siamese got the Little Vehicle from the Mōn (or Talaing) people of southern Burma and it was from the Mōns that the Siamese borrowed most of their laws. So not all, by any means, of what the Siamese passed back to the Cambodians, was merely old Cambodian reinterpreted by the Siamese. There were new elements. But when the Thai princes of Sukhotai (in northern Siam) threw off the Khmer suzerainty, they were profoundly impregnated with the Indian-patterned culture of Cambodia.

[1] The 'classical' type of Thai art was evolved in the northern principality of Sukhodaya. And the earliest things are the finest as we should expect if the art were largely a borrowing to which no vivifying native elements were added.

[2] The *Hinayana*, or Little Vehicle, was, we may remember, a thing invented in northern India under the rule of Kanishka in the Punjab, and thence spread southwards in the second century of our era. The Little Vehicle was, in its origin, a Reformation, although the cult it evolved was as little like early Buddhism as was the Protestantism of the European reformers, like the early cult of the Messianic Christians of the Levant and the eastern Mediterranean.

The Narrow Fortress

The sum of human labour and, doubtless, of human misery expended to raise the Khmer monuments was stupendous. The bulk of the labourers seem to have been Thai (Siamese) and Cham prisoners of war, whom the old Cambodians could work to death, since, during the heyday of the Khmer Empire there was always a plentiful supply of prisoners. With the prisoners toiled a certain number of native Cambodians drawn from the population by some *corvée* system. The foremen, overseers, architects, sculptors and artists appear to have been free Cambodians paid for their work. But, compared with the magnificent results achieved, the Khmer sovereigns must have erected their temples and palaces cheaply enough.

Amid the sparse forest and in one of the least fertile parts of the land, you come, in the region of Sisophon, upon one of the most considerable masses of Khmer buildings. You can use the sandy track from Sisophon to Banteay Chhmar only during the dry season, but all visitors to Cambodia should make a point of seeing the 'Narrow Fortress.'

The late Monsieur Groslier calculated that if 44,000 workmen[1] had laboured ten hours a day for eight years and one hundred and seventy-one days, they could have assembled and erected the sandstone and laterite blocks constituting the Temple of Banteay Chhmar. Groslier, furthermore, estimated that not more than a thousand sculptors could have been, at any one time, employed upon the decoration and that this decoration would have taken the thousand sculptors twenty-one years to accomplish, since all the carving was done after the walls had been erected. There was no fitting together of pre-ornamented blocks of stone.

You can spend the night in the Government bungalow at Sisophon, do the forty miles from that town to the ruins in about an hour and a half and return to sleep again at Sisophon in the evening. But Banteay Chhmar is worth several days visit and the slight inconvenience of sleeping in your car. It is advisable not to camp in the jungle unless you have a fairly full equipment since the region is wild. It is, indeed, the very inaccessibility of the place that adds to its charm. You can get no rapid purview of the buildings still clad, shrouded and half-hidden by the jungle trees. And, again, Banteay-Chhmar is a deserted sanctuary, town and palace. Its exist-

[1] He chose this figure as being that of the maximum of men who could have been effectively employed at any one time on the monuments.

ence seems to have been forgotten by the Cambodians themselves whereas Angkor Vat did not ever cease to be a holy place. Moreover, Banteay-Chhmar is in the no-man's-land where was fought out the prolonged campaign of the struggle between Siamese and Khmer. But Banteay-Chhmar is a gigantic complex revealing bas-reliefs, sculptures and statues of great beauty.

Groslier gives the main plan of the great temple in these words:

'All the galleries and colonnades join or cross each other at right angles. At most of these points of junction there rises a tower-sanctuary, stepped and staggered (in the central part of the temple) and adorned with four huge human visages (like those of the Bayon) in the other portions of the fane. As you get nearer and nearer to the supreme sanctuary, the height of the towers increases. It is about twenty feet on the periphery whereas it reaches more than sixty feet in the centre. There were, in all, fifty-six towers . . . the point where the two principal axes of the monument cross, is occupied by the holy of holies. Thus the architectural and the ritual centres of the temple coincide.' Indeed, the Banteay Chhmar monuments are the most considerable of all Cambodia. By their richness of decoration and the profusion of their sculpture, the buildings must rank immediately after the Angkor Vat and the Bayon, while, by its mass the temple of Banteay Chhmar is the largest in the whole world.

For miles around the chief sanctuary, the jungle is strewn with the remains of an extensive city.

If Banteay Chhmar was not founded by Jayavarman VII it was he who gave it, in the twelfth century, the form and face which we can faintly recognize to-day. The place seems to be the Amarendrapura of the inscriptions and the great temple was dedicated, as were all Jayavarman's shrines, to his patron deity Lokeçvara, the Boddhisattva of Pity.

The ruins you can most easily trace and visit are those of a great Eastern Lake with a *mebon*, or secondary sanctuary, upon an islet in the lake, those of the great dyke surrounded by an outer moat which must mark the limits of the city, and those of an interior enclosure whose deep and wide moat is crossed by causeways adorned with giants. Moreover, you can observe the remains of the city walls, pierced by four monumental gates. Within these walls was a Sacred Park (not improbably a substitute for the Deer Park where the Buddha achieved *nirvana*, or the freedom from existence) containing several secondary buildings and the central temple that

is a labyrinth of galleries and porticoes and towers bounded by a rectangular gallery adorned with bas-reliefs.

The Baray, or Eastern Lake, is a great reservoir which must have been used to supply the city with water. The containing parapet has long since been breached and the *baray* is now a forest. On the western edge of the lake is a projecting terrace whose substructure must have bathed in the waters. The containing wall of the terrace is sculptured with the most delightful scenes of aquatic birds, their wings spread among lotuses. . . .

The moat of the central temple is over two hundred feet wide and about fourteen feet deep. Four axial causeways, thirty-six feet broad, traverse the moat and lead to four immense entrance gates topped with four-faced visages of Lokeçvara. Steps bordered by sitting lions lead up to the gates.

An enclosing gallery bounds the temple and the interior face of this gallery bears scenes in bas-relief which for richness, variety and excellence of execution, rival anything the Khmers ever achieved. Essentially, these scenes in low relief depict incidents of the war against Jaya Indravarman, King of Champa, at the end of the ninth century. The stone pictures are not, therefore, contemporary with the events they appear to depict. The reliefs are rather of the nature of those 'historical' paintings which adorn so many of the public buildings in Europe.

The temple proper consists of a rectangular gallery enclosing a court occupied by another cross-shaped gallery to the north and south of which are two empty stone basins with steps leading down to their bottoms. These basins were doubtless holy pools used for ablutions and lustrations. Near the basins are two edifices raised on terraces twelve feet high supported by stone monsters.

The main block of the temple is really triple, each of the three temples in one consists of a central tower-sanctuary preceded by a pavilion and adorned with corner-towers and large north and south gates. Two symmetrical sanctuaries surmounted by towers bearing gigantic faces and surrounded by a rectangular gallery, flank this main block to the north and to the south. There is a complex of the same design to the west of the main block and in this complex is the central sanctuary raised on a terrace twelve feet high to which access is had by four flights of steps.

Such is Banteay Chhmar as it is gradually revealed to you amid these living ruins . . . lengths of wall having lost all architectural significance, but serving still as props for a mass of tightly packed,

calm and vivid world of sculptured figures. At your feet are tumbled squares of carved masonry.

Behind, above and around are the smooth, pale grey trunks and contorted roots of the insinuous *bombax* or *fromager* trees. They bear their leaves high up towards the sunlight and away from the green twilight. Their trunks and branches, if you slash their limbs, yield the viscous white sap which, in age-old legend, is mysterious, perhaps sacred, from its resemblance to human milk and sperm. The sacred tree spurts life-giving and life-creating secretions while it strangles, disintegrates and dislocates the proud palaces and temples the ancient Khmer monarchs raised by the sweat and blood and misery of countless serfs. Can there be civilization without slavery?

It is rather difficult for the visitor to realize that in this apparently calm and quiet land, you can walk right into beast-infested jungle, a few hundred yards from quite a large village. And, in this northern part of Cambodia villages are rather rare.

Yet, it does seem as though the wild animals of Cambodia are more discreet and retiring than those of many other lands. You soon get used to catching glimpses of bears and monkeys. You never know where and when you may meet a bear, but, generally speaking, they sheer off and mind their own business as naturally as the little black bears you may often come across in an afternoon's ramble in the Adirondacks (and that is only a night's journey from New York). There are two sorts of bear in Indo-China. There is the nice little Malay sun-bear with a cream-coloured crescent on his throat; and there is the great Tibetan black bear who is a far more formidable customer, but he is, fortunately, comparatively rare. And he likes the hills.

Tigers are abundant throughout Indo-China. They hunt at night and hide in the thickets during the day. Their sight is excellent and their hearing acute, but they avoid men whenever they can, though sometimes, in out-of-the-way places you may come across half-grown cubs gambolling about. Then is the time to keep a sharp look-out. They may be just at the beginning of their careers and fending for themselves. Then, on the other hand, they may not, and a lean and angry tigress may be somewhere not far away. I have seen three young cubs trail across a main road, out in the Cambodian bush. You might have taken them for over-grown cats. A large male may weigh more than five hundred pounds, but there are few man-eaters in Cambodia. The pickings are not so good as

in over-populated India. And then, again, the Cambodians are better fed and more lusty than many of the skinny, famished Indian peasants. The smell of tiger you can notice at a considerable distance. He stinks ranker than any other of the great cats.

You don't find tigers by chance. If you want to get one you lure him by bait, and, often when he is in rut, he will not come to the most deliciously putrid viands. It is a good rule never to follow a tiger into the thickets, however badly wounded you may think he is. The jungle soon confuses you and the tiger's claws are almost always infected by the carrion he eats—for he will have his meat high—and the slightest scratch he gives you will set up the most virulent and deadly blood-poisoning.

There is plenty of panther in Cambodia. But panthers are rather timid beasts and, although they will not hesitate to snap up a pig or a dog on the outskirts of a village, a child with a stick can drive off the beast which, although about half a tiger's size does not weigh more than a third of the larger animal. Moreover, panthers, like tigers, come out only at night or nightfall. Anything you set for them must be quite fresh and they will not nibble, unless it is clean, at bait set for tigers.[1]

Ay en Camboxa oro, plata, pedrería, plomo, estaño, cobre, seda, algodón, inciense, menjuy, lacre, marfil, arroz, elefantes . . . y es la puerta principal para gozar las riquezas inestimables que tiene el Reyno de los Laos. . . .

QUIROGA DE SAN ANTONIO

The old chroniclers saw gold and jewels in all distant lands, but if there is any gold in Cambodia, no man has yet found it. Lodes have been reported near Sisophon and Garnier said that he had washed gold dust from the sands of the Angkor moats. But no more . . . there is iron in the Dangrek Hills and the Kouys, a jungle tribe of smiths, who made the clamps for Khmer stonework, still fashion the metal into amulets, since they still are moved by the tradition of the novel, magic substance so mysterious and magical to men of stone and bronze cultures.

There is some jet in Cambodia and enthusiastic prospectors have thought, or said, that they had found traces of petrol. In any case,

[1] Black panthers (which are just black forms of the common sort) are much rarer in Indo-China than in Sumatra or in Java. The golden panther is not often met with in Cambodia and although the cloudy panther (a nocturnal beast mostly lodging in trees) is common enough in Siam, it does not seem to find Cambodia so much to its liking.

the Japanese reported that they had discovered an oil field in eastern Siam. Indeed, the only subsoil real wealth of the country is afforded by the sapphires of Pailin. Men say that fools alone look before them when it has rained at Pailin, since you have only to stoop down in order to pick up handfuls of the precious stones. Most of them are not very valuable, though from time to time some fine, luminous pure azure gems are found. Nevertheless, it is pleasing to be able to gather sapphires as you would violets. . . .

The track from Battambang to Pailin down towards the Siamese border leads through Samrong, Snang and Treng for some sixty miles, the last thirty of which are through dense forest rising on your left to blue, wooded heights. Snang is the half-way house and here is an early brick temple with carved stone lintels—probably tenth century.

The Land of Blue Stones

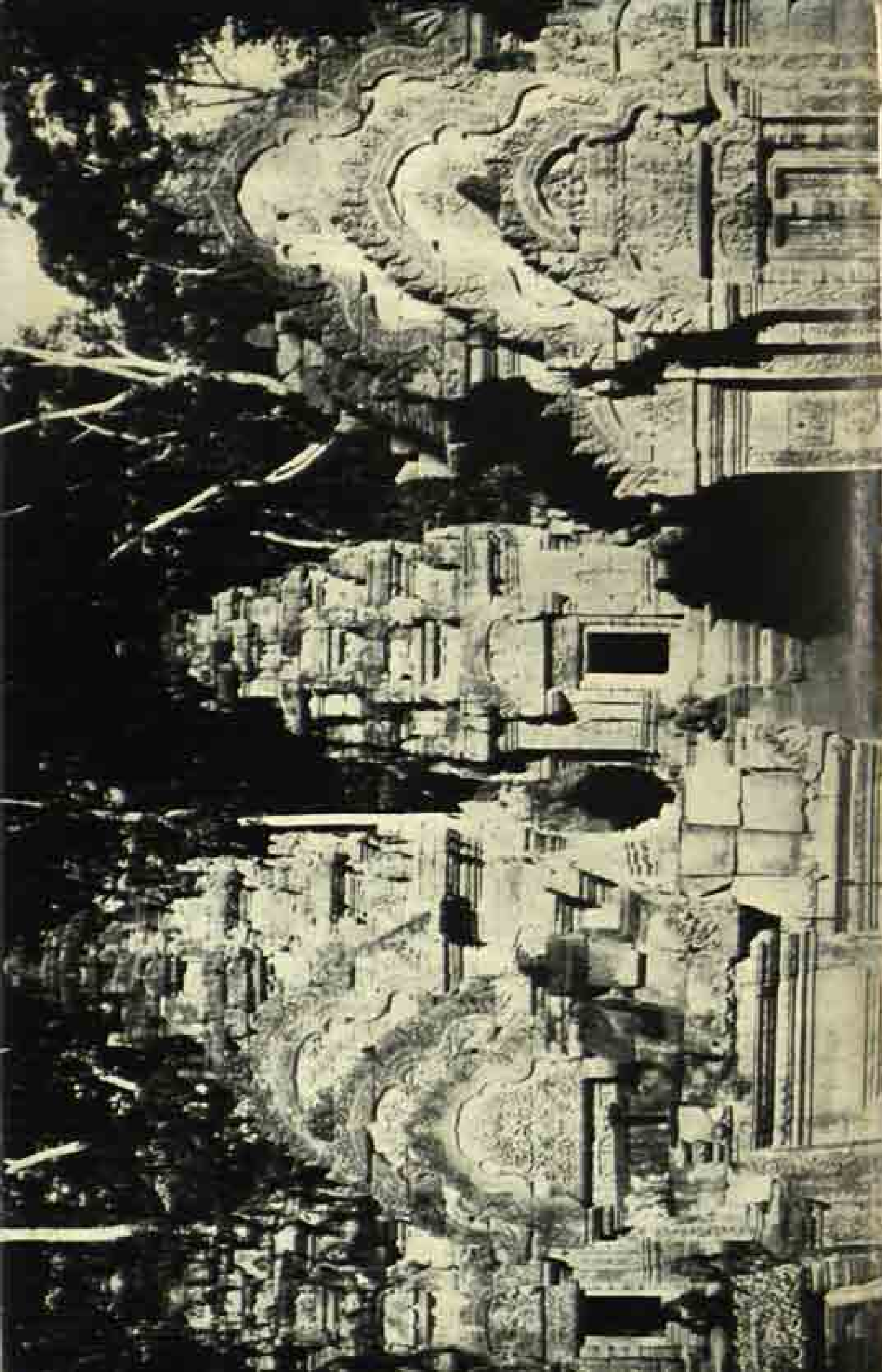
Pailin (Phai-lin) is about seven hundred and fifty feet up in the hills of the coastal range which, under various names, runs from the east of the Menam valley in Siam right down to the delta of the Mekong in Cochin-China. This series of ridges and hills and mountains is doubtless an ancient island joined on to the plain by the filling up of central Cambodia's sea-gulf.

Pailin is surrounded by hills, wooded, blue hills of antique shape, none of your barren slopes which we have to call picturesque in our northern lands. And Pailin is built upon sparkling red earth. As you enter the town, there is the Phnom-Yat crowned with a cone or stupa (*chetdai*) ninety feet high. And the cone sharpens into a golden spire out of which spurts a flame of silver-gilt brilliant with precious stones, real precious stones, not just bits of glass and quartz . . . for you are in the City of Sapphires.

Then comes the Burmese pagoda. You might be in Mandalay or Pegu, especially if you come hither when the festivals are on. The best time is that of the Moon Festival, the *Poy Doeun Si*, held at the Phnom-Yat in February or March. Then the scene is quite Burmese . . . processions of flower-offerings . . . the girls, their glossy hair smoothed into chignons, their bodies graceful under multi-coloured skirts and bodices brilliant as boiled sweets, their heads shaded by huge, flat umbrellas . . . and their laughing faces . . . all very un-Cambodian . . . and the open-air theatre . . . and the women not chewing filthy betel but smoking white cigars . . . and the Peacock Dances . . . colour, movement. . . .

***Neak Pean: The Island Shrine before Restoration** (**p.** 183)*





For Pailin is a Burmese town, though it is in Cambodia and not more than ten miles by road from the Siamese frontier. The two and a half thousand inhabitants of Pailin are scattered and spread about along four miles of streets and amid orchards, flowering gardens and many, many roses blossoming in the shade of the coco-palms and arecas. For here you are high up, the nights are fresh, the roses sweet.

The little wooden houses are perched, fret-worked and open to the street. Clean and neat and their verandas laced and strung with orchids and bowers . . . . the Burmese are much more forthcoming than the Cambodians and quicker-witted and generally brighter, but also, no doubt, much more given to crimes of violence, though the Burmese of Pailin are different from the Burmese you may meet with in other parts of Cambodia (where they do not enjoy a very enviable reputation); the Burmese of Pailin are prosperous men and women, with a profession which keeps them in comfort. They are organized and more or less govern themselves.

Here is the *délégation* or residence of the French representative. There is no bungalow where you can stay, though, if you are recommended by the Government, the *résident* will be glad to put you up for a night or two. . . .

But the Burmese of Pailin, if they are professional men, are men of a profession which does not demand too hard work. Theirs is a luxury profession, but it is the luxury trades which bring in the money. Who ever heard of jewellers or the chairmen of diamond companies going broke?

The Burmese of Pailin like flowers, they like feasts and holidays, they like sitting about smoking and chatting and gambling. In fact they much resemble ourselves. They are dog-lazy but they are a good deal better-tempered than we are. And then, they live in a country where no food must be imported. They sell something everyone wants, and they buy as and when they feel inclined. Their capital is in Blue Stones—and that's just as good an investment as gold, you can't eat either—or bits of paper marked *La República de Patagonia pagará al portador* . . . . several million *bolonios*—perhaps.

The Burmese of Pailin are quiet and friendly, they invite you to come into their houses, sit down, have a good drink of tea (real tea, that is, China, and not Indian tannin-brew; the Burmese live, in their homeland, too near tea plantations for them to drink anything but China tea abroad) and a smoke. They are quietly conscious

Banteay Srei: (*p.* 187)

of their superiority (don't ask me in what this lies, except that since they are sure of it, it does exist) over the Cambodians, whom the men of Pailin regard as the former subjects of the Siamese, themselves former subjects of the Burmese.

It was in 1875 that sapphires were discovered at Pailin, then, of course, in Siamese territory. The Burmese, as the classical experts in all pertaining to ruby and sapphire mining, cutting and selling, settled around the first mines and built Pailin. They have kept themselves quite distinct from the people of the surrounding districts. They have married among themselves. They speak Burmese. They follow their own brand of Little Vehicle. They are exclusively prospectors, jewel-cutters and gem merchants. They will have nothing at all to do with tilling the soil or toiling on the land. They are merchant aristocrats. And they are, or were when Ménard and I visited them in 1939, British subjects, just like you or I. . . .

And you can, if you will, go on to Boyakar where the Pailin river cuts a deep bed through which its crystal-clear waters gurgle round huge blocks of sandstone fallen from the sheer, shrub-grown, blue-green cliffs. . . .

Cambodian Riviera

Kampot, the littoral province of Cambodia, stretches its screen of hills and mountains a full two hundred and fifty miles along the shores of the Gulf. This is no monotonous background such as you see along the westward-turned, and somehow sinister, face of Burmese Arakan. The coasts of Cambodia are, again, different from that golden-green screen which slowly unfolds itself along the Annamese littoral of the China Sea. The Cambodian riviera has not the porcellanous, astringent, scroll-picture loveliness of Annam. Kampot is something nearer to us . . . there is an ever-changing drop-scene—now steep cliffs, then verdant knolls, again, high mountains cloud-capped. Here are the Cardomoms whose peak Phnom Kmoch juts up nearly five thousand feet. The *Phnom Kravanh*, as the Cambodians call the range, merges into the north-south chain of the Elephant. These are the heights about which curl and cluster the wisps of mist denied to the dry, clear air of the Cambodian plain. To these ranges Cambodia owes its luminous, pure sky, so magnificent by day and by moonlight a paradise . . . the Gamboge Moon rises always crystalline and like a disk of burnished gold. . . .

The Cardomoms and the Elephant lend the land its climate of lasting summer.[1]

This Cambodian riviera of exquisite grace is something apart from all other regions of the land whether plain or mountain, jungle or rice-field. From the fringing wall of hills, torrents tumble down to the sea, jerking into cascades and cataracts, spates with sturdy Cambodian names—the Prek-Piphat, the Stung-Samrong, which cuts a highway known as the Gates of Pech-Nil, the Stung-Chay-Areng, the River of Kampot, whose affluent, the Stung-Kamchay, drops and breaks into embowered waterfalls most unexpected in this tropical land.

Kompot town lies there where its river splits into two arms enclosing the islet of Trey-Keh. And all around are the pepper-groves whose penetrating, spermatic, perfume excited the evening air.

Kompot is a place of some six thousand inhabitants and the town has a decent bungalow. I should like to live there for weeks and weeks and wander by the cascades and on the forested slopes, and explore the grottoes of Phnom-Rang and Phnom-Sar and row across to the treasure islands where huge crabs, like long-legged scarlet turtles, scurry over the glittering sands. And I should like to poke about in the caves of Kbal-Romeas and of Phnom-Dong on Trey-Kas island and see whether by digging a bit, just cutting a trial trench, we might not hit upon some rather nice evidence of ancient men. How could they have shunned this paradise in olden times?

Behind, and high up in the Elephant Ridge, is Bok-kor.[2] It will take you two hours to drive through the Emerald Valley. The mountain road is bordered by thick forest whose trees shoot up, often, a hundred feet above you. The Emerald Valley shimmers in green mist. It is a world of leaves and lianas, of murderous thorns and monstrous trunks, it is a world quite uninhabited by man. This *Phnom Kamchhang*, as the Cambodians call it, is a compact mass of

[1] And also its three months heavy with storms which never break. Although Cambodia is right in the tropics, the heat is rarely very oppressive. As in all monsoon-lands, April and early May are the hottest months just before the rains break. The best months for the traveller are November and December. The rainfall ncreases with the altitude. On the Bokor Heights more than 15 ft. of rain falls every year while the Cambodian plain at their feet receives not more than 4½ ft. Although snow sometimes falls on Chapa (nearly 5,000 ft.) it has never been seen on Bokor (only 3,000 ft.). The lands to the west of the Annam Chain (i.e. those of the Mekong river system) the monsoon rains are surprisingly regular. But to the east, in the Annamese lands the amount of rain falling each year cannot be foreseen.

[2] Rectè Bok-ko, that is the Zebu's Hump.

ancient (Triassic) sandstone riveted directly upon very antique rocks (pre-carboniferous strata). It has been dry land for countless ages and the ridge, so long and so often an island in the past has remained insular. It is an isolated outcrop rising abruptly from the plain. Cambodian legends shroud the place in mystery. It is the home of ghosts . . . it is full of elephant, gaur, monkeys, panther, tiger, parrots, perhaps rhinoceros (but no one stalks them) and of deer.

Cambodia is particularly rich in deer.

Barking deer and *sambar* are found almost everywhere. The latter is a splendid beast, the velvet of whose horns is much sought after by the Chinese chemists and druggists, for their customers consider it a powerful aphrodisiac. Chinese medicine consists largely of aphrodisiacs, since the Chinese think that a man (or a woman) is not well and healthy if he or she is not filled with sexual desire. The Axis deer is more uncommon. It is a beautiful beast bearing a yellowish coat dappled with white spots. The Eld deer and the little plains' deer keep out of the jungle. The Eld deer lives in rather large herds and the plains' deer only retires to the forest during the great heat and bounds out on to the plains if disturbed. Its flesh is excellent venison, and if you are moving about in the wilds a pleasant addition to the usual canned fare.

On a sheltered sweep of beach down below Bok-kor is Kep. *Kep* means a saddle, and the saddle-like cape juts out protecting a broad sweep of strand. It is a strand fringed with coconut palms and screened by a string of little Robinson Crusoe islands. Bungalows and villas are smothered in foliage . ... and the bay is dotted with the white sails of junks on the Canton-Singapore run.

All this coast is festooned with islets making the sea less threatening than it is . . . some sixty miles west of Kampot and along a corniche of grace, is a bay shaded with giant filaos and safe by the barrier of an island . . . here is Réam, Rama, auspicious name . . . thence you can take boat to Bangkok.

The Elephant, true to its name, has a broad back, uninhabited save for sparse groups of *phnongs* or 'savages,' lowly cousins of the Cambodians, 'wild' men said to be, in way of life, the most 'primitive' of all Indo-China. It is a strange land, a forgotten world like a piece of an antique age thrust up and isolated and forgotten. The hill-station of Bok-kor is surrounded by great forests, wet forests, forests with moss-grown grey boulders and the refreshing smell of turned earth and of damp, fallen leaves. But forests, when you look up and beyond and afar over the ridge, seem a blue-green woolly fleece

over which hover always a slight haze . . . and there is the Popok-Vil ('Turning Clouds') amphitheatre where the sky swirls. . . .

At Bok-kor there is a Palace Hotel less horrid than its name suggests, perhaps because all around are rotting chalets and the whole has rather a shabby and therefore (under a southern sun) a friendly air. When there is no mist, and that is not often, you get an enchanting view over the opalescent coast—the Cambodian riviera with Pirates' Island, Treasure Island . . . an alluring inland sea.

From Kep a decent road leads you to Ha-tien on the Cochin-chinese border and thence to Phnompenh. You may visit on your way back the Phnom Chisor nearby which is a Khmer tower, the Prasat Neang Khmar, or Tower of the Black Virgin. Was this dreaded Kali, Goddess of Destruction and Death? If it was, it is about the only trace we have of her, or of any other 'terrible' cult among the Khmers.

Ta-keo to the south of Phnompenh is a flat region of little natural relief but dotted here and there with Khmer ruins of which the most worthy are those of Ta-Prom, Phnom-Chisor, Phnom-Bayang and Phnom-Da. Ta-Prom stands on the shores of a little lake and near a modern temple about twenty miles from Phnompenh on the route *locale* No. 37. About ten miles farther on is the more striking site of Phnom-Chisor. All these *phnoms* or knolls, when they are not quite artificial, are ancient islets dating from the time when the Great Lake was an inlet of the sea covering most of the western lowlands of Cambodia.

The main temple of Phnom-Chisor at the summit of a wooded hill is joined by a great stone staircase and a causeway to a sacred lake known as the Tonlé Om, and this causeway passes two other sanctuaries, the Sen-Thmol and the Sen-Ravang. The sites have been cleared in recent years and the sacred lake dredged and cleaned of its choking rushes.

About thirty miles to the south of Ta-keo on the Chaudoc road is the sanctuary of Phnom-Bayang on the top of a heavily forested knoll nearly a thousand feet high. The central *prasat* or tower is well preserved, as are also a library and an enclosing wall. There is a rest-house half-way up whence is a marvellous view ranging over the Chaudoc plain on the one side and over the Triton Hills and the Tamlap heights on the other. The temples of Phnom-Da are on the banks of the Angkorborey river some six hours by canoe from Ta-keo or four from Chaudoc.

They are on the summit of an abrupt peak rising sheer out of the

plain. The brick *prasat* crowns the height, and within this imposing building was found the colossal statue of Shiva, now one of the principal ornaments of the Phnompenh Museum. Half-way down the slope is the *prasat roha russey*, recently restored, that is supposed to have been an anchorite's cell. It is of sandstone and therefore of considerably later date than the *prasat* above.

When you come down from the Phnom-Da you can continue by canoe as far as the village of Angkorborey, an ancient royal city, built on both banks of a shady and verdant stream.[1]

[1] Ta-keo has a good bungalow and is an excellent half-way house for travellers coming from Cochin-China to Phnompenh to the north-west or branching off towards the Cambodian coast.

CHAPTER V

The Blue Pavilion

It is advisable to forgo exercise except walking, to take warm baths, to sleep upon a soft bed, to get drunk once or twice a week—but not to excess—and to indulge in sexual intercourse when the occasion offers.

Hippocrates' advice to the ageing Socrates.

WE slipped into Phnompenh, a sleeping city.

Ménard dropped off at the street corner. He was staying with friends.

'*J'aime les femmes,*' said he waving me good-bye, '*quand j'en ai besoin; voilà tout,* I'm so sorry I can't put you up. I don't have to remind you of the old Indian adage, the *summum* of their philosophy: *tat twam asi,* thou art that, thou art the man, the kingdom of God is within you.' . . . He had, hitherto, until this last leave-taking, avoided all reference, as I can remember it, to the creeds of the lands or to those of the India which bore them, all reference, that is, except a purely archæological one, as you may say.

Was it emotion at good-bye, or was he in tender mood? His first words decided me that he was just feeling sentimental or, at least, so disposed that anticipation of pleasure made him sensitive,

'Il but,
Il devint tendre.
Et puis,
Il fut
Son gendre.'

As runs the eighteenth-century epigram on the Hebrew patriarch. . . .

When you are tired from long sojourn in the dusk or dark and are suddenly bathed in luminosity, perception peoples the clearly-seen stage with a myriad memories which are, for you, and for the moment, an integral part of the scene.

Phnompenh was, for me, utterly different on this mauve-moon night from the city seen under the setting sun of my arrival. All was then charming and refreshing and not at all unexpected. The broad

avenues, the villas swathed in exotic growths, the orderly and comfortable clubhouse. A European garden-city with a few exhibition buildings scattered about. But this night was potent. We did not know where we were going. It was late. We turned into avenues of white, rather tall buildings, late nineteenth century enough by day, and now anything you fancied. We went to an hotel. There were no rooms, said the porter, whom we wakened from his mat. Then I was in what might have been an apartment house off the Champs-Elysées in Paris, but, oddly, Chinese were sleeping all over the stairs and halls. What was it? Who ran it? No answer and no room.

Into the street again so warm and luminous and theatrical. The painted plaster reared up like the pagodas of Pagan, Indian but not Indian.

I was so tired that objects were at once forced on to the stage of my sodden imagination swarming with disparate images. Fever or fatigue, or both, and a rather cruel glimpse into the composition of thought. Dissociation. Most of us have some dream-scenery, difficult to define, but almost expressible when a visible scene in our waking life seems to reflect a parcel of our dream.

I have what people tell me is a long memory. I mean that I can in bits and flashes remember far back into my infancy. As, perhaps, is usual and common, it is hard to sort out what is really remembered from what has been told and from what I have myself projected back, unwittingly, into my own distant past. And, moreover, I cannot always clearly distinguish between what I saw and heard and felt in waking life from what I experienced in dreams. Of the two sorts of experience the dreams are possibly the more vivid and real. For although, now, I dream little and, if I dream at all, there come to me visions in the half-waking state enjoyed just before full consciousness comes back or just after it has been lost. In earlier life, however, when I dreamt more often, dreams would persist through years. They were very rarely dreams of action or of persons. They were dreams of places, of scenes and of scenery. And the most persistent of them and, I must say the most enjoyable and satisfying were dreams of white walls. White walls made by men, not white walls of cliffs or crags. White walls with relief and shadow and surfaces broken with irregularities most often.

And now, when I see such walls they set me dreaming even when I am awake and hold for me some quality of fixation forming a background to whatever sort of man I am (for the moment) in my interests and thoughts, so that I feel that I can glance over my

shoulder and feel quite at home and at ease. I am in my right physical environment. You may ask right for what? Right for paying no attention at all to the environment. . . .

And my white walls are divided into two classes, as I see it now, but this must be because an experience of beholding many things in many places has enabled me so to sort them out. There can have been no such schematization when I was very young. I am sometimes inclined to think that the vision which excited these dreams at the first (or perhaps I should say the vision which first crystallized the dream by contact with what we call reality) was one quite small scaled and even trivial. But a young child's visual comprehension is a tricky thing and for no reason at all (as it seems) one scene may be spontaneously preferred to another which, in our later life, we should think much more apt and suitable to impress and to become as it were the pattern, exemplar and prototype of all scenes we may like (or feel impelled) to refer to it.

It seems to me that when I was very young I was taken to see some old woman who had parrots in cages, bright-coloured parrots and that these cages were set in a bow-window adorned with filmy gauze curtains, and that the windows were opened on to walls which were painted white or white-washed. The day was bright, as I think I can remember it, very bright for England. And it may be the luminosity rather than the objects themselves was what stamped the complex on to my imagination.

It may also have been, to use an absurd phrase, the degrees of whiteness, that of the curtains, of the inner walls of the room, of the outer walls in sunlight and in shadow. In fact a range of tones. Never since have I found myself near or between white walls without feeling that I was at home.

When I walked, for the first time, down the concave paved surface of the narrow alleys in Cordoba and enjoyed the white walls from bluish white to grey, I was rapt. The same pleasure informs me when I pass down some of those Paris streets where there are painted façades, sometimes ornamented, sometimes only satisfying because of their relief and angles and shadows.

And I still think that the white walls are more significant for me in the relatively dull north than in the lands of brilliant light and dark shadow. In the north, there is more play of tones.

Walk down the Rue Christine in Paris and you see what I mean.

Only the other day, passing through the square wherein was the Pantheon still luminous in a limpid June evening, I saw a white

painted façade of an apartment house. All its windows were open and all glowed from within with yellow light, the shades and degrees of 'whiteness' were wonderful and nothing I had seen or experienced for months drew out from me so much of the atmosphere and life of my own past.

I felt almost as though I could sit down, there and then, on the terrace of Capoulade, and write an autobiography which should be much more than an autobiography, which should be of universal application and value . . . what presumption! God forbid . . . it was, luckily, only a very passing phase. . . .

By this time, in mauve Phnompenh, my Annamese driver was getting very peevish indeed. I was rather enjoying the break-down in the programme. He had a bed for what remained to us of the night. He wanted to curl up in my car. And I was very much in the way. He drew two piastres a night for his lodging and that considerable sum (twenty French francs in those days or about two shillings and sixpence of our pre-war money, you could do a good deal with that in the Indo-China of 1939) he wanted to save, not spend.

So, a petulant swirl away from the stage-setting and through the shadows towards the river, the trees and leisurely gardens.

We were crunching on gravel and stopped before a palace. Pham jumped down, ran in an open door, reappeared in thirty seconds, crying, 'Here is your lodging.'

'This is the Blue Pavilion. It waiting for you.'

In a flash I was in a great room. My bag was beside me. Through the oblong windows and behind the hibiscus bushes I could hear my Annamese speeding away.

Perhaps this Blue Pavilion had its name from some nostalgic colonial, haunted by youthful memories of the elaborately Second Empire restaurant which used to stand by the Seine's edge, there where you turned round left to drive up to the gates of St. Cloud park. As far back as I can remember this St. Cloud *Pavillon Bleu* was living on past glories, but it seems that under Napoleon III, and even during the first decades of the Third Republic, it was quite a gay place for gallant meetings with good food. The Blue Pavilion in Phnompenh is much more mysterious than the *Pavillon Bleu* of St. Cloud could ever have been. During my few days stay there I saw no one but a grave and rather tall Sino-Cambodian—and him not often. The house, blue indeed at night and in the moonlight, but by day an overgrown and rather showy villa, such as would not

be out of place in Bucarest, lies back from an encircling grove of thick trees.

Some minutes after my Annamese driver had gone, the Sino-Cambodian arrived through a spacious bathroom, and, bowing slightly, asked:

'Whom have I the honour of addressing?'

I told him. He was unmoved.

'If your Excellency should desire drinks, women, sheets or anything else we may dispose of, he has but to ring three times.'

And I was quite alone.

The floor was of polished marble. The walls white. The furniture of that hard, carved Chinese back-wood which some misguided travellers bring back from the East. In the vastness of this room, however, the awkward bad taste of the ponderous chairs, tables and stools was insignificant. The bed, also of back-wood was low. The mosquito-net scooped right up to the ceiling like the canopy over Napoleon's throne at Fontainebleau. The windows were just oblong bays giving on to the cricket-infested garden. The place was swept and garnished. The plumbing worked. It was all very strange.

The soft bed accentuated my aches and pains of travel. There is nothing like a hard bed when one is really battered and shaken. Still, no complaints. I was lodged as sumptuously as anyone may be in Phnompenh. But it was almost dawn before I fell asleep.

And, as will happen when we are fatigued, the images dancing into my mind and view were not those of the immediate past days but those of the beginning of this whole phase of renewal by travel of which the Blue Pavilion marked a term.

I was looking down upon a relief map of the moon. A hot desolation of rock. There, across the Persian Gulf the sun-cracked crust covers lakes of black gold. This is the fief of Aramco.[1]

The stony wilderness straightens out into slabs of chrysoprase. These oily waters are broken by the jagged point of Arabia stabbing towards the belly of Persia. All that burning waste to the south is fabled Oman as far as Muscat. To our ears a fallacious sound, jade-cool and promising lustrous grapes, musk, musk-roses or muscatel or muscadet bright green-golden wines . . . the words command the image. Take care of the sounds and the sense will take care of itself.

Then, in the air, you are above the highway of India's conquerors. Nearchus, they say, awaited the triumphant Alexander upon the

[1] Ar(abian) Am(erican Oil) Co(mpany).

waters of Karachi Harbour. The Scythians, the White Huns, the hordes of Islam, the Moguls and Nadir Shah came this way.

Darius once held sway as far as this and this soil was doubtless trod by the invaders who established the Indian Valley civilization out of an amalgam of what they brought with them and what they found on Indian soil more than four thousand years ago.

The Long Tale of Indian Life

Four thousand years is a long time in the history of men, in their history, that is their written records, but not, of course, in their existence which is to be seen as a long, long road, mostly lost in the shadows, then, for a little, discernible in the twilight of dawn and now, for a few generations past, clearly illuminated.

The proto-historic sites in the Indus River valley, sites which have thrown so much light upon the earlier history of men's settlement in India, cannot be, reasonably, dated earlier than about two thousand five hundred years before the beginning of our era. As is usual, when new remains are found, new relics of past men discovered, there is always a tendency to exaggerate the antiquity if the traces are those of civilized 'modern' man. There seems to be an irresistible urge to make antiquity more ancient, and this urge springs from a complex attitude, the most respectable phase of which is the belief that the evolution of civilization must take a very long time. The older school of Egyptologists would set the first dynastic period at over six thousand years ago. It seemed that Egpytian civilization was so archaic-appearing that it must stretch back 'ten thousand years before the Pyramids.' But the farther we see, the clearer it seems that civilizations arise very rapidly. The lapse of time between the advanced Neolithic cultures in Sumeria and the Valley of the Nile, and the full-blown civilizations which followed on to those cultures, is quite short, a few hundred years or so.

Once the spark has been struck the tinder burns fiercely—and dies down, if there is not plenty of material for the fire to feed upon.

From comparison with known dates in Babylonian history there is no reason to suppose that there was any city on the Mohendojaro site before 2,500 B.C.[1]

[1] The comparison of dates is arrived at by the comparison of objects found both in the Indus Valley sites and in Upper Mesopotomia where the absolute chronology is rather well established. For the Indus Valley civilizations, as for so many others, there is a school which will thrust back into remote past the dating and claim for the Indus sites, an antiquity surpassing that of Sumeria or the Nile Valley. There is no direct evidence for any Indian culture antedating the Indus Valley, but it is most probable that there was one and that the Indus Valley

The Indus Valley peoples excelled in the modelling of animals as amulets, toys or idols and some of the statuettes of bulls are more vigorous and life-like than anything medieval India can show. Indeed, *the* bull of India, *Nandi* the sacred bull of Shiva is a highly stylized presentation.

The Indus Valley peoples seem, indeed, to have been followers of beast cults. On some of the seals is shown before the figures of bisons, rhinoceri and tigers a manger of special form doubtless containing offerings. Later, in historical times we find the same animals which were adored presumably by the pre-Aryans of the Indus Valley as the mounts of vehicles of Indian Gods. The crocodile and the tortoise carry the river-goddesses Ganga and Yamuna. The buffalo is mounted by Yama, the God of Death, the bull is sacred to Shiva, Indra rides upon an elephant and Ganesa the eldest son of Shiva and Parvati is elephant-headed.

There is a faience tablet from Mohendojaro whereon is depicted a personage sitting cross-legged under a canopy and surrounded by adorers sheltered under the wide-spread folds of a cobra's hood. One of the beliefs most deeply anchored in the Indian mind, the sacredness of the *naga*, or snake-genius, was, then, already held by the Indus Valley peoples. The scene from the Mohendojaro tablet is a prefiguration of the Buddha's adoration by the *naga*, and in medieval Indian iconography the god Vishnu reclines upon the folds of Ananta, the Serpent of Eternity. So, the serpent finials of Cambodia and the *nagas* of Angkor have an ancestry of over four thousand years.

Among the idols of the Indus Valley perhaps the most important is that of a female divinity in whom we may recognize the Mother Goddess[1] and she seems to have survived as Aditi in the Rig-Veda and thrives to-day as Durga.

civilization was the product of a clash of cultures. The epicentre of such autochthonous culture may be looked for 500 or perhaps 1,000 miles to the east of the Indus. There is some evidence that human settlements survived in the Indus Valley as late as 400 B.C. (and therefore long after the Aryan invasions)—the land was probably in those times better wooded and better watered than it has since become.

[1] The cult of the Mother Goddess, of the Sacred Bull, the use of the engraved seal, pictographic writing, painted ceramics, brick buildings were features common to the river-valley civilizations of the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Nile and the Indus. A God surrounded by four beasts is familiar to us from apocalyptic legend, which is found, with certain variants, in Elam, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Crete. Almost naked she has a sort of cloth about her middle, her high headdress is complicated and her neck is adorned with many necklaces. She is the Great Goddess, Magna Dea, the Mother of the Gods, symbolizing the reproductive forces of Nature whose cult seems to have originated in Phrygia and to have spread in neolithic times in all hither Asia and the shores of eastern Mediterranean.

A three-faced divinity surrounded by four animals, a tiger, a rhinoceros, an elephant and a buffalo may well have been the ancestor of Mahadeva or Shiva. And the Indus Valley civilization already is one which owes, it would seem, much to the West. The worship of kings is closely associated with the 'soul-stuff' theory whereby the invisible life-matter will wane and fade away and die, if it be not maintained and protected. And the sovereign, as was held, and, indeed, may still be held by some in Cambodia, embodies the life-essence of the whole community. Hence the protection and maintenance of the King's soul-stuff is of the utmost importance to every one of the subjects.

Loyalty in all ages and all communities must be deserved—and it is not, of course, even then, always forthcoming; but loyalty to the sacred king whose soul-stuff influences the every phase of your life and mine, is a loyalty most imperative to the subject. In serving the king's life and prosperity he is serving his own, until such time as the king is obviously weakening and ageing and, therefore, must be replaced by a younger and more vigorous holder of soul-stuff.

We know little about India from the fade-out of the Indus Valley civilization until the appearance of India's Constantine, the Emperor Asoka, who, in the second century B.C., raised Buddhism to the place as the dominant northern Indian creed it was to hold for so long. For the all-important Aryan invasions we have only indirect evidence. Mithra, Varuna, Indra and Nasatya appear as deities of the Iranian sovereigns of the Mitani at the beginning of the fourteenth century B.C. Heine-Geldern would set a date of between 1150 and 1000 as the most probable one for Aryan migrations into India.

We may, perhaps, set a provisional date for the earliest Vedic scriptures (in some form doubtless materially different from that in which they have come down to us) at about 900 B.C. In those scriptures (as we have them now), arts, crafts and metals are mentioned which were no doubt importations by the Aryan-speakers. In any case, the Aryan-speaking invaders must have found much of the iconography of their faith ready to hand. The symbolism of early Vedic literature was embodied in much of early Buddhist art, and the mystical and subjective element which is so noticeable in the earliest Hindu scriptures was no doubt a forerunner of what became a part of classical Buddhism.

It is not difficult to reconstruct the moral atmosphere of the early Aryan-speakers of India. Good things for them, as for Job, were children, cattle, possessions and peace. These 'Aryans' did not

preach conversion since conversion means sharing one's goods given by the Gods. 'Evil' for them is disaster. It is a 'pre-moral' age. By about 800 B.C. it may be, we have a prose literature of ritual. 'Evil' is still not 'sin' as we understand that word, that is to say, transgression of divinely established law. 'Evil' is the concourse of evil powers ranged against men. The idea that misfortune is the wages of sin is a much later rationalization.

There is nothing unique nor surprising in all this. Parallels may be sought and found in other cultures and civilizations. The evolution of 'moral' ideas in ancient China.[1]

Indeed, all societies we know of passed through a 'pre-moral' stage which Waley calls the 'auguristic-sacrificial'. 'Goodness' at this stage means obtaining lucky omens, keeping up the sacrifices, conforming to the 'Way of the Ancestors' which conformity brings 'power.' But in their progress from the pre-moral stage the Chinese and the Indians took divergent paths, which paths have led to states so profoundly divergent that the Indian complex and the Chinese are as antinomous as any to be found in the world of men's society.

The modern Vedic writings, it is true, present esoteric knowledge as a substitute for ritual and asceticism (that persistent Indian phenomenon so alien to the Chinese spirit) appears long before Buddhism.

What is thought to be the 'Aryan' element in Indian religion and culture may be much less important than was formerly imagined. The 'Aryan' conquest was, above all a linguistic conquest with all that such a conquest implies.

M. Ferdinand Lot has well defined the consequences of linguistic conquest in these words:

'Change of language implies not only a change of body but the substitution of one spirit for another. It is a mutation of values. The cultivated classes, forgetting the forms of their literary, juridical or even of their religious life, adopt other forms. Their ideal becomes quite different. Their past is clouded over, since the past of people whose *idium* one adopts becomes one's own past. It is not only the future, the forward vision which changes, it is also the backward vision which takes on another direction. The familiar sky slips from

[1] As brilliantly summarized by Arthur Waley in his introduction to *The Way and its Power*. Things that happen in this stage can be divided into two classes; (a) the things man does on purpose and (b) the things which happen 'of th m-selves.' It's the latter class which is so ominous. Omens, indeed, in our sense of the word (e.g. the linking of man's fate to the motions of the stars) seem to have come comparatively late into China and to have been due to foreign, perhaps, Indian influence.

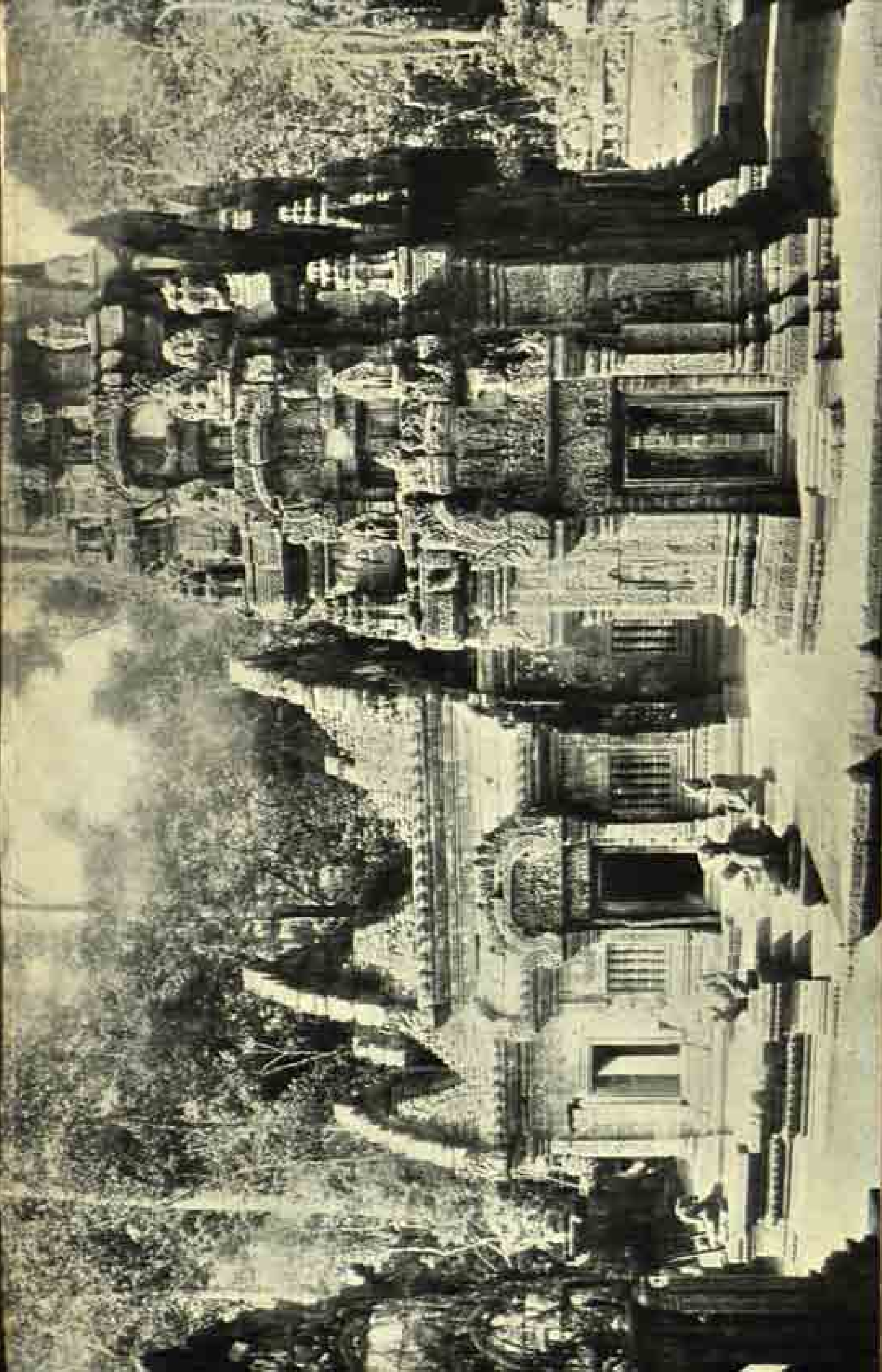
the horizon to give place to another sky. For the masses the change is also momentous. The change of vocabulary is, relatively speaking, of secondary importance. Essentially a language is an organism . . . . Linguistic mutation is not even rejuvenation. Peoples who adopt a new language, adopt one already worn by the conquering people. What is adopted is something already old.'

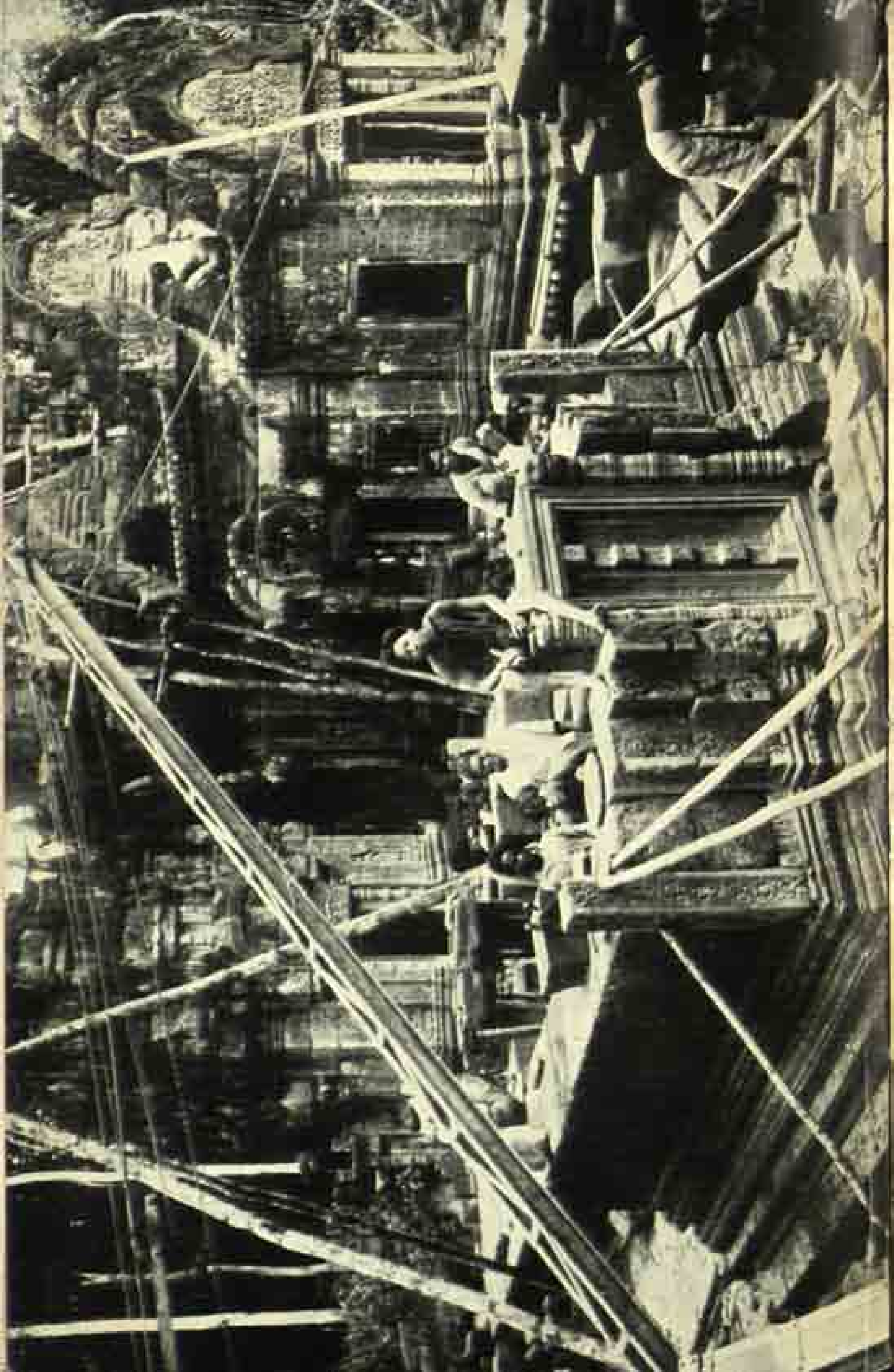
The religion of the Vedas is a ritual technique to the right performance of which are subjected both moral order and the retribution of men's acts. The Vedic hymns seem to have for object that the gods should treat men generously and in a nice, open-handed fashion. And, these Vedic gods are either hypostasations of the forces of nature or of analogous origin.

Agni, the 'spirit of the sacrifice' is fire; Soma is the spirit of the intoxicating plant used in sacrifice and to secure the divine drunkenness which makes men like gods and wipes away all their woe; Indra is the manifestation of the rain-clouds and lightning—'Thou art the Lightning of Indra'—Usas is the 'rosy-fingered Dawn,' the blessed sky and heaven is a god, as is also the maternal earth, Rudra is the fierce god of the storm and devastation . . . Surya is the Sun and Vishnu also a solar deity (and probably a south Indian, Dravidian one). Later on (perhaps about the seventh and eighth centuries before our era) the Veda was enriched with 'commentaries' or *brahmana* and, still later, by 'esoteric lessons' or *upanishad* (which may be said to form the real canon of Hinduism). By the time of the *upanishad*, two of the most important and most specifically Indian doctrines had been developed—we do not know under what influences nor in what circumstances. These were the doctrines of *karma* or 'acts' or the notion of causation whereby the individual carries the full responsibility for the good or for the evil which may befall him. And the doctrine of *samsara* or the 'ocean of life' or cosmic process whereby beings are born and reborn according to their *karma*.

To these doctrines may be added that of *moksa* or salvation, but salvation in a peculiarly Indian sense. The Indian knows from what he desires to be saved. It is from living, from suffering, that is from life and its recurrence from the individual as reincarnations. It may be stressed that these three doctrines or dogmas are common both to Hinduism and to Buddhism. The Buddha, like all reformers, did not originate, he reinterpreted the doctrines he had received. In its fundamental assumptions, Buddhism postulates as evidently true the theories and dogmas of the *upanishad*.

Banteay Srei: The North Library and Central Prasat *seen from the East* (p. 188)





Still later than the *upanishad* come the 'rules' (*sutra*) and the 'treatises' (*castra*), while the *upanishad* itself postulates the existence of an 'Absolute' which (when the individual has shed off what is, in him, temporal and contingent) is found in each one of us.

It is as well to state clearly that two main themes are common both to Hinduism and to Buddhism. These are the transmigration of souls or reincarnations (*samsara*) and the search for salvation (*moksa*) which will break the chain of re-births. The essential cause of transmigration is the spiritual ignorance in which man is usually plunged. This fundamental error of ignorance is maintained and renewed by acts (*karman*) until salvation is obtained.

Thus in Indian phraseology the word we translate by salvation has quite another connotation from that conveyed to us by 'salvation' from the power of the evil one, from damnation and the like.

The Indians indicate three main ways or paths by which salvation may be obtained. Physical and spiritual asceticism (*yoga*),[1] intellectual search for spiritual knowledge and mystical contemplation. Each and all of these permits of the realization of the divine and of the self, of the conviction of the identity and of the union of the divine and of the self by disintegration and by the disincarnation of the self.

There is, in these scriptures, a far-reaching evolution to be noted. Metaphysics have become the main preoccupation of the Indian religious leaders, while meditation replaces, to a large extent, the supremacy and all-importance of ritual technique.

About the beginning of our era (and therefore at a time when in northern India, at any rate, Buddhism was, if not the creed of the majority of the people, at least, the established church in most states) a whole complex of beliefs and cults (many of them, doubtless, pre-Vedic) make their appearance (or their reappearance), and these antique legends and dogmas were crystallized into the two great epic poems, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

The popular cults are seen from about the second century of our era, cults founded not upon rites but upon *bhakti* or violent and mystical devotion and contemplation whereby the will of the worshipper is confounded in that of the divinity. And, at about the same time, side by side with the imposing cults of Shiva and

[1] Yoga (cf. Yoke) is that discipline which will provoke states of consciousness favourable to deliverance or 'salvation,' states of consciousness wherein is achieved *SAMADHI* or the 'perfect experience' wherein subject and objects become one and the worshipper is identified with the worshipped, wherein men become gods.

Vishnu, grew up philosophical systems of which the most celebrated are the Yoga and Vedanta, still flourishing.

As J. H. Hutton has pointed out, it is clear that there was an essential continuity of religious cult and of belief from pre-Rig-Vedic times. This 'popular' religion of the authochthonous Indians profoundly influenced that of the Aryan-speaking invaders and reduced the high god Indra to a mere doorkeeper of Olympus. Shiva shot up to the first place and assumed most of the attributes of the Vedic lightning-god Rudra. And Shiva's cult goes back, so it would seem, to Indus Valley times.

Worship in the Vedas consists of hymns and sacrifices[1] but there is no trace of images, temples or devotional cults. Both Buddhism and the reactionary (and late) *Upanishads*[2] discounted sacrifice, ignored *puja* (or ritual worship) and aimed at release through esoteric knowledge and thus developed a saviour-complex.

The reformed and resurgent Hinduism emerged two-faced. One was an esoteric, philosophical visage and the other face a popular, polytheistic one.

India seems to have been re-Hinduized from the non-Buddhist south and intrusive Islam in the north speeded the collapse of Buddhism there. It was from the seventh century that Hinduism gathered strength and spread rapidly. The real and essential cause of the triumph is still obscure. Was Buddhism always regarded as a thing imposed by rulers such as Asoka and Harsha?

The Brahmins had triumphed. It had often seemed as though their privileges and their position would be definitely abolished by the anti-sacerdotal, non-theistic faith of the Buddha, but Buddhism, like Christianity, died in the land of its birth and, again like Christianity, when it was torn from its background of social practice and moral tradition, it assumed, itself, all the panoply of ritual and dogma, all the philosophy of doctrine, which it needed to triumph as a world-faith.

Palace

The Royal Palace of Phnompenh is really a royal village behind a high white enclosure of walls set with a frieze of curious heart-shaped crenellations. Behind and beyond the walls you may see a number of flashing, yellow roofs and curling finials.

[1] Strangely enough, in view of the later and most stringent cattle-taboo of oxen and cows.

[2] The canon of the Hindu Counter-Reformation.

The palace and its grounds occupy the site of the citadel the Annamese put up in 1813 to hold the strategic point of Phnompenh and to hold down its population. At this time, the city was not the capital of the country, that was still at Udong the Victorious, which had been, on and off, the seat of the Cambodian Court since 1528, when King Ang-Chan I embellished the town and made it his principal residence.

In 1620, King Chui-Chettha II erected a palace at Udong and therein celebrated his marriage with a princess of the Nguyen family, lords of Lower Annam and ancestors of the later Annamese emperors. It was a marriage fated to have ill effects for the enfeebled Cambodian realm since the Annamese sovereign brought into Cambodia hosts of her fellow-countrymen. Thus, the Annamese got their first foothold on Cambodian soil. A foothold they were to transform, gradually, into an extensive occupation. So, by 1813, the northerners were holding the key to the Khmer realm at Phnompenh.

The Annamese were forced out of their fortress of Phnompenh in 1842 by the Siamese, whose influence prevailed right up until the time King Ang-Duong accepted the French protectorate. Indeed, from the departure of the Annamese until the taking-over by the French, Cambodia was to all intents and purposes a Siamese possession.

King Norodom was crowned at Udong on 3rd June, 1864, although the court had already been transferred to Phnompenh four years before. But there were no royal buildings in the over-grown bush-village which has now been transformed into a modern city.

Although they are in traditional style of Cambodian modern architecture (powerfully influenced by Siamese models) and although they look archaic enough, all the edifices of the Cambodian palace are modern.

The huge 'Palace of the Throne' of reinforced concrete, was put up by King Sisowath in 1919 to take the place of a rambling wooden structure built by Norodom in 1869.

The 'Silver Pagoda,' or Vat Prah-Keo, erected by King Norodom in 1902, has a main hall, thirty-six feet wide and a hundred and twenty feet long. The flooring is covered with slabs of silver. The high walls (set at intervals with long, elegant spew-pots for betel-chewers' convenience) are covered with frescoes executed on a red background. The drawings are most Siamese (or Sino-Siamese) in perspective and are dotted with green trees and walled temples

and cities, scenes from the Lives of the Buddha, and of the Horrors of Hell (you have them before you) and of incidents from the *Ramayana*. I have seen more pleasing and edifying wall-paintings. The pictures are broken, here and there, with incongruous windows, adorned with diamond-shaped panes of coloured, leaded glass . . . they remind you of Turkish baths or suburban conservatories. At its far end, the hall sweeps up into a great stupa of gold, surrounded with seven-tiered ceremonial parasols, and seated images of the Buddha. On the floor nearby are golden (or gilt) bowls and vessels and two *empire* style Sèvres vases. One is not so very far removed in spirit from the ginger-beer bottles on Tibetan altars . . . before all this you have a tall shrine, narrow for its height and topped by a pinnacle supported by fantastic *garudas*.

Before the shrine is a table for offerings. And under the canopy is the famed Golden Buddha, representing the Blessed One erect, his hands advanced in the gesture of benediction, his head crowned with a high-pointed royal diadem. The whole statue is ablaze with diamonds and pieces of looking glass. This sort of Buddha, bedecked and adorned royally, is a Siamese invention of the eighteenth century, but the Buddhas vested as princes were fabricated by the Khmers. Moreover, this upright Buddha of gold and brilliants was fashioned from the jewellery of King Norodom and exactly to the size and shape of that sovereign. There can be no doubt that this image of the Blessed One is a modern replica, a counterpart, of the Divine Images set up by the ancient Khmer rulers in the chapels and sanctuaries of Angkor. It is a statue conceived as containing, in some way, the 'essence' or 'spirit' of the dead king.

In an isolated pavilion to the left-hand side as you view the entrance of the Palace of the Throne, is kept the Prah Khan, the Sacred Sword, which is the palladium of the realm, the Sacred Sword which is the Lightning of Indra and by him confided to the rulers of the Khmer kingdom.

The Sacred Sword is in charge of the *baku* priests who were, in olden times, the royal chaplains. They still wear their hair rolled into a chignon (as Chou Ta-kwan tells us all the Khmers wore theirs) and not cut *en brosse* in the Siamese fashion which is now adopted by all Cambodian men and women, high and low, peasant and king. The *baku* profess, of course, Little Vehicle Buddhism, but they remain, all the same, the servants of the Brahmanistic deities, especially of Shiva. Moreover, the *baku* are descended, they say, from Great Brahma himself—an illustrious pedigree, indeed. There is

really no contradiction in the *baku* profession of faith. They follow the way of the Buddha, but the ceremonies, the rites and court rituals they direct and arrange are things apart, still hallowed by the benediction of the ancient Indian gods. The *baku* are no more often than are any other groups of privileged priests of an established cult, called upon to justify the faith which should be in them or to explain why antinomies and irreconcilables are an essential part of religious dogmas.

The *baku* may marry royal princesses and, moreover, their right is recognized (but most unlikely ever to be exercised) to offer any member of their occupation, who may be chosen by the dignitaries of the realm, as sovereign, should the male line of the royal house fail. We may have here some half-hidden reminiscence of a state of things when the monarchy was elective. In any case, nowadays, the role of the *baku* is just ritual and protecting. They are the guardians of the royal treasure and the warders of the Sacred Sword. The Sacred Sword must be kept spotless. A speck of dust upon it betokens grave events. To withdraw the Sword, without propitiary rites, from its scabbard, would induce catastrophe to the realm. Every month upon a Tuesday and then, again, upon a Saturday, (the days of Mars and Saturn), the Sword is unsheathed, examined and cleaned.

But among the Mois (the 'wild men' of the Annamese mountains), their 'Fire-King' (a priestly, ghostly and sacred coadjutor of the ruler) possesses a sacred sword which, according to Cambodian and Cham tradition, once belonged to their ancient kings. So one may take one's choice, but there is only one Fire-King's sword to go round. But we should be inclined to guess that the Chams have the better claim. Moreover, the Mois of the mountains are said still to possess the Cham royal treasure confided to the simple, honest, fierce mountaineers when the Annamese invaders swept over Champa. The legend that the old treasure has been given for safe-keeping to the men of the wilds is common and widespread enough. The treasures of the old kings of Tongking (and even their present human representatives—many Annamese will tell you that the 'king is hidden') are believed to be still with the Muongs—a rather 'primitive' people in the hill-country of western Tongking.

Upstairs, in the same building, is the royal treasure, the crown jewels, precious stones, odds and ends, gold ornaments, silken robes, palanquins and ceremonial parasols, some splendid emeralds. Offerings and gifts the kings have carefully kept, for nothing is thrown

away—chipped cups, ornamental flowers, dusty and artificial . . . and the diamond-studded bowler hat which was, it seems, the head-gear most affected by King Norodom. Sisowath also did not disdain this head-covering which is said to have been made to Portuguese pattern of the seventeenth century. Perhaps it, or its forerunner, was introduced to the Cambodian Court by old Diego Belloso, the filibuster who so nearly made himself, three hundred and fifty years ago, dictator of the realm. Certain it is that this bowler hat is remarkably like those high-crowned, flat-brimmed creations we may see in portraits of our James I or of Philip II of Spain. . . .

Beyond, that is eastwards of, the Vat Prah Keo, whose courts are filled with saffron-robed monks fanning themselves with palm leaves, is the stable of the Sacred White Elephant. The Cambodian kings generally content themselves with one specimen of these bleary-looking beasts, whereas the rulers of Siam are sometimes blessed with three or four at the same time. It is a moot question whether the Siamese majesties are thrice or four times blessed than those of Cambodia, or whether such a lavish display of white elephants is merely a Siamese way of showing off.

To the south of the palace is the Vat Botum Votdei (Padmavati) that we saw on the first night in Phnompenh. The monastery, which is the headquarters of the Thommayut sect, houses some ancient and inscribed stelae from Lovek,[1] Phnom Baset and other sites. Against the main balustrade of the Buddhist fane, are posed, rather incongruously, four small lingas or phalli of curiously bulbous form.

The high schools of Phnompenh (mixed Franco-Cambodian) are lodged in a building of Cambodian style near the palace, and close by, also, are the *Sala Vinichhang* (Supreme Court) and the *Sala Outor* (Court of Appeal) where red-robed Cambodian judges, capped with curious gold-embroidered mitres, sit together with a French magistrate, under a huge painting representing the combat of good and evil spirits . . . and then, you may take a walk along the broad-walk surrounding the palace walls and admire the royal elephants lumbering along, with undress howdahs strapped on their backs and their mahouts lazily tickling the great animals' ears. The man's big toes gently scratch the thin outer edge of the fan-shaped ears while, by a pressure of the knees, he moves at will the well-trained beasts.

[1] Lovek, three miles north of Udong, is now but a village with a battered and tattered monastery. The place was a royal residence from 1528 to 1593.

Crowns and Masks

The collection of crowns you see in the Pavilion of the Sacred Sword is rich enough, but nearly all of them are of the modern, though imposing, and pointed sort. These diadems were Siamese inventions (as were the many-tiered umbrellas of state). A cone-shaped crown is to be seen on Siamese statuettes and statues as early as the thirteenth century. It may well be that the Siamese (and Cambodian) spired crown is a combination of the old 'helmet-crown' of Ceylon with a flame-shaped glory (or *ushnisha*) into which, in some Indo-Chinese lands, the hair of the Buddha-images is flared up.

Not much investigation has, as yet, been undertaken, into the origin and evolution of crowns. Doubtless, their origin is complex and confused, but masks, helmets and crowns are, it would appear, in their beginnings, closely allied. And it is not fanciful to trace these beginnings in the headdress formed by a beast's head and antlers, such as was worn (according to the cave paintings) in later Old Stone Age Europe. We may see such a 'magic' headdress on the prancing 'wizard' of the *Trois Frères* cavern in the department of the Ariège (France). Animal masks have had a long life all over the world. And the sorcerer's animal-headdress may give us mask, crown and helmet.

Thou Art the Lightning of Indra

The coronation ceremonies of the Cambodian Court, like almost all the rituals have been either borrowed from or greatly influenced by Siamese models. Still, we may take it that the Siamese coronation ritual was itself largely borrowed from that of the old Khmer kings. In any case, the coronations in both Cambodia and in Siam are clearly copied from ancient India, whose royal consecrations and crownings were much influenced by Persia which is the great centre of autocratic tradition. And from Persia spread westwards to Byzantium and the barbarian west, and eastwards to India, Farther India and Indonesia, the ceremonies which, when we look at them, present such curious points of analogy whether they are in Westminster, old Rheims, Byzantium, Bangkok or Phnompenh.

No Cambodian king now will, it seems probable, ever be crowned with such pomp and circumstance as was King Sisowath in April, 1906.

The ceremonies occupied six whole days. On the first day, the king solemnly took possession of the royal residence. On the morrow (Tuesday) His Majesty robed all in purple (the colour of the day)

and attended by escorts of young girls bearing gold and silver flowers, was received in the Palace by His Holiness the Grand Master of the Order of Baku, carrying in his hand an image of the god Vishnu. His Majesty made offerings to the Buddha, gave presents to the priests and lit the wax candles. On the third day, the king, vested in dark yellow, presided over a whole series of festivities including a performance of the royal ballet.

The fifth day was the coronation itself. The king robed all in white entered the palace of the Throne to the sound of conch-shells and music. After offerings to the Buddha, the bonzes prepared the Royal Bath.

After receiving the special envoy of France (the Governor-General), the king, accompanied by the Patriarch of the Buddhist Church, the Master of the Moha-Nikay and the Samdach Prea Vonarot, Master of the Dhammayutti (Thommayut), the ministers of State and the Court and courtiers, and His Holiness the Grand Master of the Order of Baku, repaired to the Pavilion of the Bath.

The king stood upon a plaque of gold, itself resting upon a plaque of silver, which was separated from the ground by the leaves of the tree called *lovea*. The Grand Master of the Baku offered, and the king took with his left hand, a branch of the *cheiprue* tree, symbol of supreme power and of eternal felicity.

Then, His Majesty looking towards the east, the Chief Augur, invoked the protection of the Heavenly Angels while a salute of twenty-one guns was fired. The Patriarch, the Master of the Thommayut and the Grand Master of the Baku, each threw lustral water over the monarch. The king then sat down while his feet were washed in coconut juice and perfumed essences by the Prea Reamea Reachea Thippedei, Director of the Prea Vong.

The king then changed his robes and vested in the Great National Costume, returned to the throne room. It was now about nine o'clock in the morning and the ceremonies had been going on since half-past seven.

Preceded by the Grand Master of the Baku, the king walked in procession to the throne, where he received officials. Then offerings were made to divinities, prayers were recited over the food and other oblations.

Then His Majesty took up his position on a white carpet and turned east while eight of the higher ranking Baku each took up his position at a point of the compass while other Baku blew on the conch-shells and played tom-toms.

The Grand Master of the Baku handed the king two statues, one of Shiva and the other of Vishnu. The first he took in his right hand and the second in his left. Then the Grand Master gave the king to drink of a sip of the lustral water.

After that the Okhna Essarac Akhara read aloud and proclaimed His Majesty's official style and title. Then the Director of the Ceremonies made an allocution by which the sovereign was recognized as possessor of the crown, the throne, the dynastic attributes and arms, all the revenues and profits of the kingdom, all rice-fields, lands, waters, soils, forests and mountains of the country.

All the princes, ministers, mandarins and officials saluted the king. He replied briefly and then took his place upon a golden raised seat. The French Governor-General asked the king to mount the throne. The guns fired a twenty-one gun salute. The Grand Master handed the crown to the Governor-General who crowned the king in the name of the French Republic. The French representative in Cambodia handed the king the Sacred Sword which he bore in his right hand.

Formerly, when the Grand Master of the Baku handed over the Prah Khan or Sacred Sword, he proclaimed in ancient Indian formula: 'Take, for thou art the Lightning of Indra.' A formidable antique phrase to make the skin contract with ecstasy and fit to be put alongside the majestic formula of papal coronation: *Accipe tiaram tribus coronis ornatam et scias te esse patrem. . . . regum. . . .*

The crowning ended with a general salutation to the King. Afterwards, about eleven o'clock, the sovereign sat upon his bed in the Throne Room while the eldest of the Court ladies offered him as 'servants' (i.e. concubines) the princesses and ladies of the Court and the wives of the mandarins. . . .

On the sixth and last day of the ceremonies, the King, clad in black silk and gold, and wearing upon his head the great crown, was carried in a palanquin around the city while his servitors scattered largess to the crowds. Then the procession stopped and the King got into his State coach. Now he had discarded the Prea Moha Mokoth crown and was wearing the Prea Moha Choda Panchakoth crown. A little later on, when he descended from the roach to ride on horseback to the residence of the French Governor-General, the sovereign had on his head the Prea Moha Mealea diadem. And on leaving the *Résidence* to get upon the State elephant, the monarch's head was adorned with still another tiara, the Trung Prea Peat crown.

And the reason for these changes is that Phnompenh (of course, a wall-less city) is still in Court astrology regarded as a 'microcosm.' The King makes a 'cosmic procession,' he proceeds in four different directions and he halts at the Four Cardinal Points, and for each of the four points he assumes the costume and the mount of the King of that Point. . . .

Le roi au masque d'or.

'In this country, the lords burn themselves on the death of the king, as do the king's wives and other women on the deaths of their husbands . . . and they go shorn about the ears as a sign of elegance.'

TOME PIRES *Suma Oriental*

The funeral ceremonies of the Cambodians show more local custom than do the rites of coronation. When a man is seen to be dying, a candle is lit at the head of his bed and he is made to repeat (or if he is too feeble to speak, to hear repeated) until he dies:

'Buddha is my refuge. Oh! Buddha I am thine, help me now.'

When breath has left the body, a gold or silver coin is slipped into the corpse's mouth. The visage is covered with a white cloth and the shroud is drawn tight with one hundred pins. If the family is poor the body is burned at once (widows may only re-marry after the cremation). If the family is rich, the body, or what remains of it, is kept for one, two, or even three years before incineration. The ashes are put in pots and then later bricked up inside stupas.

When the king dies, the rites are much more elaborated and complicated, though, in essence, the same. The corpse is washed—as with us—globules of mercury, as well as pieces of gold, are placed within the dead monarch's mouth. Then the new king puts upon the dead king's head, the pointed, royal diadem of the realm, and, upon his face, the golden mask. *Le roi au masque d'or*—golden masks from Mycenae. Kings wears all the attributes of the Palaeolithic sorcerer, crowns, helmets and masks, and the greatest of these are the masks.

Change your face and change your luck.

There was, they say, a benevolent Emperor of China who could not be beneficent because he had not the right face. A sage of the realm approached the sovereign and said:

'Let your Imperial Majesty wear this mask and you will find that

your subjects will spring to do your bidding with alacrity. You are not only benevolent, but you look so, and, therefore, men will not obey you, even if it is for their own good. Later, you may assume, in order, these other masks I have prepared, each less ferocious-looking than the last. And, indeed, finally, show your own face, unless you think better to speak unseen.'

The monarch took the proffered advice, and reigned long, to the great joy and prosperity of his people. . . .

For some years past, surgeons have been snicking pieces off the frontal lobes of the brain in order to make men happy, to cure them of obsessions, to make them, in a word, less foreseeing. Such operations give excellent results. Their only disadvantage, indeed, is to impair a little the creative and imaginative powers of the subject and, as most men have little enough of these powers anyway, and what little they have is not very useful to themselves or anyone else, no one is much the worse off. But such operations make a man different, they do not make him look very different except insofar as they lend him a new expression—and that is always something. When men's expressions have been moulded by hate, envy, toil, bewilderment, stupidity and frustration, such men will go on being more and more marked by these things, since, if we look like what we are, we become, also, what we look like—especially to other people.

The Americans are right. We must go farther than changing a man's expression. We must change the form of his face as well.

We cannot escape from the thraldom of our bodily form, though manners do make a difference, but manners are, to a considerable extent, determined by bodily form. We have all met those excellent women who complain they have been far too honest and virtuous and that, had they been willing to do what some of their sisters do, then life would have been quite different and far more pleasant—and profitable. But no one will tell these honest ladies that, just because they were too ugly and unattractive, they could not have done what some of their misguided but calculating sisters do. *Casta quam nemo rogavit.*

The Americans claim, with exaggeration it may be, that 'crime' is due mostly to criminals having the wrong sort of face. But we can define crime as conduct reproved by law and by custom, and what is reproved by law and what is reproved by custom are by no means always the same things. We live in a world of new crimes and misdemeanours. What is crime in one country is not in another. A cheerful lad, of rather unorthodox sexual tendencies, told me some

time ago in Tangier, 'Half the pleasure in living here I get from thinking that I can do with impunity what might land me, in Britain, into jail for seven years.'

A superabundance of laws makes for a superabundance of offences, or what is worse still, to flouting of the law by general consent.

One otherwise intelligent and, indeed, acute, French scientist has not hesitated to write thus, in confusing 'crimes' reproved, quite justly, by society, with some supposedly 'unnatural' tendencies: 'Passionate impulses, excessive eroticism'—what is 'excessive' in this connection?—'frigidity, homosexuality, bestiality, sadism, masochism, jealous love, and criminal love'—what is 'criminal love' definable in biological terms?—'and incest appear to be conditioned by hormonal perturbations and metabolic troubles which invert the lateral chains of the phenantrenic centres and transform oestrogenic or virilizing hormones into their counterparts. Inversions of the maternal instinct, voluntary sterility, abortion, infanticide, stepmothers' hatred, are all, perhaps, due to a defect in the elaboration of progestin, and of prolactin or to a lack of manganese.'

Well, now we know.

But the Americans are practical men. Their plastic surgeons get to work on the faces of a discharged convict. They have a chat with him. Show him pictures of several sorts of new face which might suit him. They will give him a face making men indulgent towards him, easing his path . . . it will be a cinch to date up the girls . . . he will have self-confidence. He will be a 'better' man, that is, people will think he is one hell of a good fellow. . . .

But even a minor correction will bring good results, as the American testimonials prove:

'Business has been much better since you pinned my ears back.'

But, to return to our royal Siamese corpse. The body is shrouded. Tradition, but I should not like to say how old a tradition, would have it that the shroud symbolizes the amnion and chorion which clothe the foetus. So, again, the king's coronation mantle and its lining are held to represent the amnion and chorion. But this explanation looks to me like a relatively late rationalisation or refinement of symbolism.

After the body has been masked and crowned, it is bent together so that the knees touch the chin and the hands are joined over the face.

So sits the foetus in its mother's womb. Thus trussed, the corpse is deposited in an urn. Then, the new king breaks the spike of the royal *mkot* or crown. Disinfectants are poured into the urn. The King's corpse is pickled. The silver gilt urn is shut. It is enclosed within another urn of sandal-wood. So the body remains for months. King Norodom's corpse was kept in its urns for over two years.

Month after month watch is kept day and night by princes of the Blood. Three times a day the liquid which has oozed from the corpse is drawn off, enclosed in a phial, carried with great pomp to a boat which sets out into the middle of the river. The liquid is poured into the waters.

When the day comes for the state cremation, what remains of the body is washed in coconut milk and perfumed. The jewels are removed and melted into an image of the Buddha.

When the great day of incineration, chosen by all the augurs and astrologers of the court, has come, a huge catafalque is erected. The new sovereign announces its posthumous name to the spirit of the dead monarch.

The royal cremation is a sign for popular rejoicings.[1] A funeral is a cheerful affair in Cambodia. And why not? A man has passed through one incarnation. Maybe his next will be more fortunate. Or maybe, supreme felicity, he may never be reincarnated. He may be definitely dead. He may have achieved freedom from existence. An occasion for rejoicing indeed. Chinese, Malay and Cambodian orchestras play. The rhinoceros mummers prance and flounder about. The bearers of the sacred fire run round. All the pomp and circumstance of the Cambodian court is displayed. To amuse the crowd are dances, cinema shows, boxing and wrestling matches, shadow-theatres and the like, now, of course, football matches and blaring radios . . . the king is being burned up.

When the catafalque has all flared and the bodily remains have been consumed, the ashes are enclosed within a sandal-wood urn which, together with the golden Buddha fashioned from the jewels, is bricked into the base of a tapering, spired stupa.

There is probably throughout the ceremonies some pre-Buddhist and possibly very ancient and 'Indonesian' symbolism of re-birth. Funerals, also, are *rites de passage*, marking a change from one state to another of our earthly course.

[1] The cremation in December 1947 of King Ananda Mahidol's remains cost the Siamese State over three million *tikals* or over £30,000.

Tang-Toc

The 'traditions' of the Cambodian court are not, in their present arrangement, very ancient. It was the close connection between the Cambodian and Siamese courts which gave the tone to the court of King Norodom, and it was Norodom who organized the ritual, ceremonial and, indeed, administrative life of his country. Norodom introduced many Siamese into his land. The Royal Ballet under him was composed, almost exclusively, of Siamese women. Many of the members of the royal harem were Siamese. The king retained, despite his anxiety to maintain his independence from Siam, a great admiration for things Siamese. And, moreover, as all threat of Siamese suzerainty was abolished by the French protectorate, the cunning king could indulge his tastes to the full without fear of political complications. Moreover, it may well be that Norodom was not displeased to stress the cultural links between his country and Siam, and that as some sort of counterpoise to the invasion of French influence.

In the Month of the Ox, is held the King's Festival. The Cambodian name, *tang-toc*, recalls that an essential part of the festivities is the exhibition, within the precincts of the palace, of works of art. The show is organized by the high officials of the kingdom and any subject may submit his work which, if considered worthy by the local selection committee, is then forwarded to Phnompenh. The works are judged and prizes awarded.

The central ceremony of the *tang-toc* is one of homage.

The so-called Taper of Glory is lighted while the official heads of the two Buddhist sects and the Imam of the Moslems offer His Majesty their good wishes for his long life and for the prosperity of his realm. Then all the principal officials of the kingdom, each in the rank of his precedence, do obeisance to the sovereign.

The First Furrow

The ceremony of the First Furrow is more picturesque, more antique and more evocatory in the parallels it suggests in other lands. There is some reference to a First Furrow ceremony in the *Ramayana*. Now, in Cambodia, during the month of Passak at an exact date determined as auspicious by the *hora* or astrologers of the court, the First Furrow is traced in the presence of the king. The *hora* play an important part in the court life of the land. There are four of them. They compose the calendar—and in all lands of ancient tradition the making-up of the calendar is a significant and

magic act—they decide what days are auspicious and what days are inauspicious for such important events as royal princes setting forth on foreign travel. And we may be sure that the days marked by the *hora* as inauspicious, really are inauspicious. We should surely fumble, fidget and fail, if all the time we were trying to bluff and to laugh off the augurs' warnings we heard them insistent in our ears[1]. . . .

The First Furrow marks the beginning of the ploughing and sowing season. Within the enclosure of the palace and to the strains of the orchestras, the king's representative, accompanied by pages and servitors in their robes of ceremony, guides the sacred plough and marks the sacred furrow. This representative of the real king is known as the 'King of the Plough.' He is followed by a lady of the palace. She personifies the 'Queen of the Sowing' as she scatters far and wide the grains of rice. Parallels between these sovereigns of agriculture in Cambodia and other kings and queens of a day, in other lands, are not far to seek. It may well be, also, that in the important role assigned to the 'Queen of the Sowing' lurks some memory of a matriarchal social system. In any case, the 'King' and 'Queen' of the Plough can be matched from ancient Egypt and from antique China.

After the seed has been scattered, the *baku* invoke the Spirits of the Earth and of the Waters, whose altars are erected at the four cardinal points and on the edge of the square marked out for the actual ploughing ceremony. So are the spirits adjured to accord abundant harvests.

The yoke of oxen which have drawn the plough are then unharnessed. The beasts are led to seven silver platters upon which are heaped grass, beans, rice, maize, sesame, water and alcohol.

The crowd of His Cambodian Majesty's faithful subjects presses as near as may be to the platters. Every man, woman and child watches anxiously to see the choice of the oxen, for so may be judged what will be the best crops for the coming season.

The Kings

His late Majesty Sisowathmonivong, King of Cambodia, was not popular among the French 'colonials,' who openly accused him of the not-uncommon royal failing of being rather dilatory in the payment of his debts. But royal personages can nearly always run

[1] The *hora* are to be distinguished from the *achar* who are versed in such arts as those of exorcism.

up rather long bills. When the late *duc* d'Alencon of the French royal house died, his library and his belongings were sold up, a most unusual thing for the Bourbons who have all the French virtues of good book-keeping and economy, but His Royal Highness had gone for years upon the principle that anyone was honoured in supplying him with anything and, indeed, the *duc* got away with it until his death. But still, his effects were sold eventually.

A king is more privileged than a royal prince. There was never any jumble sale at the royal palace in Phnompenh, and, indeed, His Majesty's assets were considerable.[1] Perhaps his successor is a more careful householder. In any case, for the past seven years there has been such a shortage of imported consumers' goods in Cambodia that, doubtless, the royal exchequer has had to meet fewer calls upon it than in the good old days.

Despite these disgruntled murmurings of the commercial gentry, His Cambodian Majesty is every inch a king, surrounded with taboos and deference. In theory, at least, His Majesty must never touch the soil—a widespread and antique taboo, for, if the immanent *mana* or power of majesty were to come into contact with the earth the worst is to be feared. The feet of the solar king might burn the earth and still more, of course, might his precious blood. So, royal princes might never be beheaded. As it was frequently necessary to make away with them, they were bashed to pieces with blocks of sandal-wood—a nice, perfumed, royal death. Whoever touched the king, even to save his life, must die. And no one but the sovereign himself must die in the royal palace, which is a temple of immortals, with one immortal putting on mortality for a time.

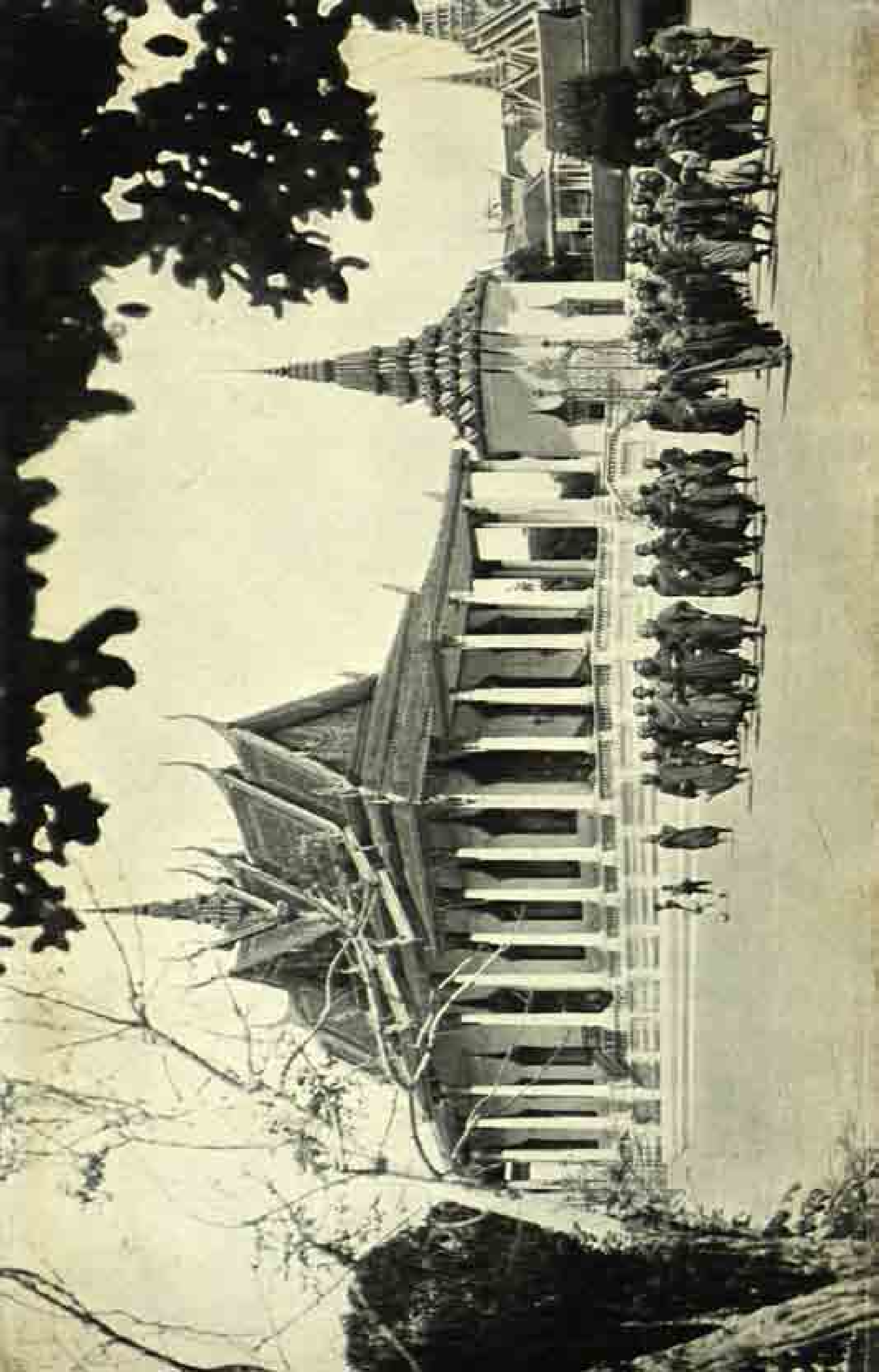
The Old Man of the Sweet Cucumbers

The reigning dynasty of Cambodia claims direct descent from the Khmer sovereigns of Angkor, but a link-up between old and new dynasties is more than doubtful. The fact is that the decline and fall of the Khmer Empire caused just such a rent in the life of the Cambodians as was made in Europe by the barbarian invasions which destroyed the Roman Empire. No pedigree, no genealogy of any family, bridges the gap between Roman and medieval Europe. And yet, of course, most of the men of A.D. 800 were the direct descendants of the men of A.D. 500—there had been shifting of

[1] The French compared unfavourably poor Sisowathmonivong with the French-trained Bao-Dai, Emperor of Annam, who, it is true, was not a lavish spender (influence, no doubt, of his French upbringing) but did settle up his bills.

Yeai Pou: The Garuda *Pillar of the Pagoda*





population, there had not been any migrations into Europe comparable with those of the times of the *Völkerwanderung*.

The legend of the Old Man of the Sweet Cucumbers (which is paralleled by a similar story from the folk-lore of Burma) reflects, doubtless, something of the troublous times following the fall of Angkor. And, perhaps, also in the fable is some sort of allegory or tradition concerning the origin of the reigning royal house whose documentary pedigree starts not earlier than the end of the fourteenth century.

Once upon a time there was an old man called Ta-Chey who used to plant sweet cucumbers in his *chamcar*, or kitchen-garden, by the stream-side. One season his crop of cucumbers was so luscious and so rich and so flavoursome that he could not resist the impulse to offer some of them to the king himself. The king, having graciously accepted the old man's offering, found the cucumbers so much to his taste, that the sovereign handed the worthy peasant a lance in order that he might guard and protect his *chamcar* and keep all its crop for the sovereign's exclusive use and enjoyment. One day, a little later, the king, desiring to test the vigilance of the old fellow, crept into the *chamcar* at night and attended only by one of his suite. Now, as the night was very dark and moonless, Ta-Chey thought that he had robbers and thieves in his plot, so he struck out with his lance and killed the king.

Whereupon, all the mandarins, high officials and dignitaries of the realm, seeing that Ta-Chey was an upright, just and meritorious man, called him to the throne and crowned him King of Cambodia.

But the descendants of the Old Man of the Sweet Cucumbers had no better luck than their forerunners. The fabric of the state crumbled. Palace intrigues and palace revolutions shook it further. The sad history of Cambodia from the end of the Angkor period in the fourteenth century to the establishment of the French protectorate in 1861, is a long tale of civil and foreign war.

When we look on the Khmer ruins, or on those of the Maya, and glance at the modern Khmers and the modern Maya and see in them rather slow and stolid and inactive peoples, and then compare living faces and bodies with those sculptured for us on the walls, we are puzzled. The Cambodians are obviously the same people, in the main, as were the ancient Khmers . . . yet . . . *cur lapsus quod fecerunt*? Has there been change of climate? Well, the old Khmers were better drained and supplied with water than their descendants,

Phnompenh: Monks in the Courtyard of the Silver Pagoda (p. 227)

but the former had to create all the waterworks, they did not inherit them.

And, if we are tempted to compare the Khmers with a people much nearer to us, a people to whose predecessors (if not ancestors) we owe so much, the Greeks, we shall soon find that the parallels are not very valid. The heyday of Greek art, creation and civilization, passed away more than two thousand years ago. During those two thousand years climate has changed in the Mediterranean basin, and, moreover, there has been a very far-reaching substitution of new peoples for old on the exiguous, rocky peninsula of ancient Hellas.

Not so with the Khmers. Their day of glory sank but a bare five or six hundred years ago. The Cambodians of to-day are essentially the same people as the Khmers of yesterday. And yet . . . religion? Yes, but would a powerful, pushing people under the command of harsh, cunning kings have adopted Little Vehicle? One may answer, well, the Burmese were rather aggressive until comparatively recently. True enough, but aggressive against Siamese. The Burmans never put up much of a fight against Chinese invaders and then Burma is on all sides, but one, admirably protected by natural barriers.

It may be, in putting all these searching questions which assail us whenever we see such contrasts between past and present, it may be that we are naturally, insensibly and improperly considering that mighty monuments, success in war, hosts of slaves and subject peoples, wealth levied from dependencies and all the apparatus of a state's apparent good fortune and 'success,' it may be that we consider such things are the accompaniments only of great strength and great power of resistance. Yet all empires we know of have collapsed whence harshly challenged. Once the grip has been clasped upon empire, it will not be released, no one will throw off the grip until the enemy tries his luck and proves that there is no longer any hand in the gauntlet, and that the glove might have been shaken off with the greatest of ease at any time within the last hundred years, it may be.

Nothing succeeds like success either with states or individuals. Improbable achievement astonishes, quells opposition and therefore makes further achievement almost easy. Conventions, laws and traditions favour the rising fortune.

You have peace, or victorious war—and that means short war. You have money or the means to command men's labour. You can give creative artists the leisure and freedom from care they need.

And you can do much with very few artists. The difference between a brilliant civilization showering its works and scattering its products and a dull culture, may only be the difference between five hundred well-patronized creators and five hundred potential creators who are half-starving, who are baffled and who are ignorant of the arts whereby they may manifest their genius. All human edifices are fragile, and even if we keep our house in order, we just cannot remove it from time to time to look at the state of the foundations. And, moreover, in all human movement (one had almost said in all movement of living creatures) once a line is taken and progression along the line is unhampered, change is very rapid, for good or evil (if those words have any meaning). . . .

It may be that civilizations never give their most spectacular and magnificent fruit until they are past their prime and on the decline, in the sense that the reaction, physical and spiritual, (and the one makes the other) is the greater the greater the action. Nothing goes up but what comes down. To fall you must have climbed. And then, did the Cambodians make their own monuments? How many should we have to-day if there had been no suffering, tortured millions of hapless, foreign slaves? No civilization without slaves—but to-day we are just going through a phase, a very short phase, of course, a brief interlude, of slaves without civilization . . . but, bless us! why slaves? To-morrow we will all be free men pushing buttons. . . .

A Sad Tale

One sovereign, for a time, restored some sort of order and ruled, the humble, but free, successor of Jayavarman's mighty line. He was Ang-Chan (1516-1566). He reigned for a half century. Like most men who achieve much, he was long-lived.

Ang-Chan repulsed the Siamese . . . and welcomed the first Portuguese missionaries, but Catholic missionaries whether Portuguese, Spanish or French, have never made many converts among the Cambodians. Little Vehicle Buddhists are as impervious to evangelization as are the Moslems. Whereas, in neighbouring Annam more than five per cent of the population is Catholic or affects to be. But then the Annamese have no real religion at all. The Chinese did not spread religion where they went and among their subject peoples.

La Santa Fé Catolica

. . . la riquezas inestimables que tiene el Reyno de los Laos . . . el Rey Apram Langara que huyendo a los Laos fue muchas jornadas derra-

Q*

mando monedas de plata y oro para que ocupandose en cogerlas no le diesen alcance los Sianes.

QUIROGA DE SAN ANTONIO

Quiroga, whose notes on Cambodia are singularly accurate (although he calls Angkor on the Mekong) if rather dry, fills his writings, as was the custom of the time, with plentiful allusions to the *santa fé catolica* which he hoped the Cambodians could be induced to adopt, and to the *guerra justificada* by which term he qualified the activities of the Hispano-Portuguese filibusters and the swarms of friars who followed them.

One, at least, of these adventurers was a picturesque fellow whose career in Cambodia is not unlike that of the famous 'Siamese White' in the neighbouring realm. These were the days when Europeans had, as yet, no highfalutin ideas about 'pink' men's essential superiority, or if these pushing Westerners had such feelings, they were careful to keep them quiet.

Diego Belloso was a Portuguese, a Lisbon lad, at a time when the Portuguese capital was still a great international mart and port. Belloso turned up at the Cambodian court about 1580, the year his country lost its independence to Spain. Therefore, for the understanding of Belloso's adventures, we may remember that he was, technically, a Spanish subject, or at least a subject of Philip II of Spain as King of Portugal. Diego so ingratiated himself with King Chi Chettha I (the 'Apram Langara' of the contemporary European chronicles) that he gave the Portuguese one of the royal princesses in marriage. So, the fellow's career started off auspiciously and true to the type of the best adventure stories.

Belloso got the idea that the surest way for him to reach fame, power and wealth would be to build up a department of state (with himself as Secretary of State) to run the whole country. To this end he attracted into Cambodia some other adventurers like himself and both Spanish and Portuguese. But the aggressive Siamese were pressing and menacing under the leadership of their energetic king, Phra Naret. Belloso decided that it would be prudent to set sail and to ask the Governor of the Phillippines for armed aid. The Governor, however, was busy with other matters. He was making preparations for his expedition against the Moluccas. Despite Belloso's presents of an elephant with its mahout, a gilded howdah and four black slaves, despite Apram Langara's personal letter appealing for help, despite vigorous backing by the Dominican monks—who seemed

to have thought that the King of Cambodia would soon embrace the Catholic faith—and in spite of the glowing accounts Belloso delivered concerning the fabulous riches of Cambodia, the Spanish Governor would do nothing and, what is more, not even make any promises.

Belloso got back to Cambodia fearing the worst and racking his brains for a story to satisfy the king. But, while he was absent in the Philippines, the Siamese had taken the offensive and had captured, sacked and burned Lovek, the capital. Apram-Langara had fled to Srey-Santhor. And, as soon as he arrived on the scene, Belloso himself was made prisoner. So he had quite another set of worries. Then, like the cunning and resourceful man he was, our Portuguese was able to convince the Siamese that he was but the advance guard of a Spanish invasion. In the twinkling of an eye Belloso was promoted from prisoner to Ambassador extraordinary, charged by the Siamese king with a mission to Manilla for the securing of Spanish neutrality in the war between Siam and Cambodia.

In 1594, Belloso set off again for the Philippines, leaving behind, as a hostage for good behaviour in Siamese hands, his old crony and stooge, one Blas Ruiz, who plays in this story the part of the inevitable faithful follower. But if Blas was a little less quick-witted than his Portuguese boss, he had his full share of Spanish daring.

In the meantime, while Apram Langara was fleeing and scattering gold behind him to stay his pursuers, and while he was in asylum with the Laotians at Stung-Treng, his nephew usurped the throne of Cambodia and reigned under the name of Prea Rama Choeung Prey (or 'Huncar Prabantul' as the Spanish chroniclers call him). The nephew was more fortunate than the uncle and pushed back the Siamese. But while the new king and his forces were at the front and confusion reigned in the rear, Blas Ruiz, held prisoner on his own vessel, managed to massacre his warders and set sail for Manilla. His ship made such a good trip that Blas arrived in the Philippine capital on the same day in June 1595, as did Diego Belloso.

The new Governor, Luis Perez de Las Marinas, yielded to the persuasions of Belloso and the Dominican friars. In January 1596, three warships were fitted out from Manilla for Cambodia. The commander was, of course, a Spaniard (the Spaniards, during their domination of Portugal, avoided giving Portuguese high command), one Juan Juarez y Gallinato. The ships were captained by Diego Belloso, Blas Ruiz and Gregorio de Vargas respectively. The weather was bad and during the crossing the convoy was dispersed, but Belloso and Ruiz got their boats up the Mekong to 'Chodemuco'

(i.e. Phnompenh) without the flagship with Gallinato and Vargas on board.

Then Belloso made a bad mistake, showing that he was not really of the stuff the great captains or petty Napoleons are made of. Belloso found himself with relatively few forces (most of the soldiers and arms were on the flagship) and he feared that he would be lost if he tried aggressive tactics, so he, most maladroitly, gave out that he was come bent only upon commercial pursuits. Nothing more was needed to excite the whole Chinese colony, then, as now, most rich and powerful in Phnompenh. All the waterside quarter was soon in a riot fomented by the Chinese merchants who scented loss and damage from the Spaniards' peddling. Finally, the whole thing flared up into a rebellion during which Spaniards shot some three hundred Chinese.

Poor 'Huncar Prabantul,' the king, was puzzled and hesitant. As he did not know what to do, he did nothing. He refused to receive the Spaniards' presents which were, moreover, addressed to the deposed monarch, Apram Langara. Even the enticement of a donkey, a beast hitherto quite unknown in Cambodia, was powerless to induce the king to receive Belloso.[1] So the Portuguese decided to force matters. He made a raid on the royal palace of Srey Santhor and destroyed it. The king was killed during the fighting. Belloso had with him only thirty-eight men. At this moment the lost Gallinato turned up on his flagship off Phnompenh. He strongly disapproved of Belloso's rash action and decided to turn round and sail again for Manilla. He consented, however, to put off Blas Ruiz and Diego Belloso at a point on the Annamese coast, since they had come to the conclusion that the best thing for them to do was to make their way, by trekking over the Annam Chain, into the Laos country, and to the old king, Apram Langara. Such a walk would be quite an adventure to-day. In the sixteenth century it must have appeared a mad attempt. But the Spaniards did this sort of thing. The same breed of men who scrambled over the Andes in armour and then rowed down the Amazon two thousand miles and more to the Atlantic could easily traverse Indo-China.

And the two men got through all right.[2]

But when they arrived in the Laos country, they found Apram

[1] This donkey plays a great part in Cambodian chronicles and became as famous as the first rhinoceri or giraffes brought to western Europe.

[2] Probably by following tracks along the line where now runs the road from Quinhon through Pleiku to Stung-Treng on the Mekong.

Langara already dead. So it was one of his sons whom Belloso brought back to Srey Santhor to be crowned at the beginning of 1596 as King "Barommo Reachea." Belloso was now a king-maker. He and Ruiz got king-makers' rewards. Belloso received the province of Baphnom as an hereditary fief and Ruiz became dynast of the province of Treang. Belloso looked like ending his days as an eastern potentate, a mayor of the palace, a regent, a king in all but name.

But, although the peaceful and subservient Cambodians accepted things as they were, the Moslem Malays (still an important element in Cambodia) got very jealous of the immense influence of the Christian adventurers and there was much unrest. Belloso, indeed, felt that he had again to call in outside aid. This time, the Manilla authorities listened to him at once. A fresh expedition left the Philippines in 1598, but its vessels were all dispersed by typhoons and none of the ships reached the Cambodian coasts. The next year, however, several cargo vessels with supplies for the lost ships, nosed up the river to Phnompenh. On board came a motley crew of Spanish and Portuguese adventurers attracted by the stories of Cambodian opportunities. Things looked a little brighter for Belloso. Then the blow fell. It had all been too good to last. The Moslem Malay who commanded the Cambodian fleet, massacred (with the complicity of Chinese and Japanese merchants)[1] the whole crews of the Spanish flotilla moored upstream from the capital. The alarm was given at the Srey Santhor palace, but the king had few troops to send with Belloso and Ruiz who, nevertheless, set out to punish the Malays. But these and the Japanese (the Chinese as usual abstaining from fighting) cut the king's troops to pieces and slaughtered Belloso and Ruiz.

So ended the adventure of Diego Belloso.

With Chi Chettha II (1618-1626) we are right into the period of Siamese domination. Chi Chettha had been, as a boy, held hostage at Ayuthia (the old Siamese capital) and he came back therefrom to reign. He had had such a bellyful of Siamese that he took a rash decision. He sent for and married an Annamese Nguyen princess from Hué. Three years before Chi Chettha died his energetic consort had secured a concession for her people. The first Annamese factory

[1] The Japanese, in these days, were, of course, still over-seas traders and adventurers, the claustration of Japanese not having been effected by the shoguns until a generation later.

(which was to be the advance post of conquest and occupation) was set up at Miu-xui in 1623.

Rama the Apostate

The fourth successor of Chi Chettha was one Réam (or Rama) Thipdei Chan (1642-1657). His line of escape was not marrying into an Annamese royal family or putting himself under Siamese protection, or going Siamese altogether. Ream took a bolder course. He became a Moslem, was circumcised, publicly recited the Profession of Faith and adopted the good old Semitic name of Ibrahim. Moslems in Cambodia were (and are), in the mind of the people, associated with Malays, marauders and murderers, harsh, fierce men of the south . . . so the old queen-dowager, who was one of those really able, fearless and cold-blooded women the Annamese (and much more the Chinese) throw up from time to time, the Nguyen princess, took command. She called in a regiment or two of Annamese troops which her relations in Hué were only too delighted to send to the fabulous and wealthy south. Poor Rama the Apostate, as the Cambodians call him, poor Ibrahim, martyr of the faith, was confined in a peculiarly cramped cage for the remainder of his not very long life. The queen-dowager would, from time to time, visit the wretched man. Then she ruled through a puppet sovereign while she watched with satisfaction, her fellow countrymen, the insidious Annamese, digging into the rich province of Bien-hoa which, as the price of their aid, she had given them.

The Annamese marriage looms as large in Cambodian history as do the Spanish marriages in that of Europe. In lands where polygamy prevails, it may be that the best plan is for the king not to marry. For generations before their end, the Sultans of Turkey took no wives. All the members of the imperial house and all the successive sovereigns were the offspring of concubines. It was the same in later Cambodia. If you have a queen-consort, then her children must succeed—or it needs a civil war to exclude them. Whereas, if you have several scores of children bred from concubines, none of the boys has any better right to succeed than another and there may be a bright one somewhere among them.

Moreover, although concubines are chosen for their looks, their promise of pleasure, and although they are retained for their erotic arts, a silly concubine does not last long. There is no conversation between the acts. Silly queens last for their lives, especially if they come from abroad and have truculent relations to back them up—

relations who, in no circumstances, want the lady to return home.

It is a curious thing that in those monarchies of Asia which have survived, you will see little physical difference between the members of the reigning house, of the sovereigns themselves even, and the bulk of the people. Moreover, in Japan, the one and only monarchy of the Far East where there is an hereditary nobility, it will be observed that the members of the Imperial House look, not like the great nobles, but like the peasants—the mass of the people. Poor Hirohito certainly does not appear very imposing, noble or well-bred. And not a few of the Japanese aristocracy do look well-bred. The fact is that the Mikado is the son of a raving lunatic who was himself the offspring of an illiterate peasant concubine of the old 'Restoration' emperor, Mutsuhito.

The Annamese had definitely annexed Saigon (in what is now Cochin-China but was then a Cambodian province) by 1698. King Ang-Tong (1755-1775) had to cede to them the territories of Tan-an and of Go-cong. King Ontei (1758-1775) was obliged to part with the regions of Tra-Vinh and Soc-trang to the insidious northerners.

King Ang-Eng (1779-1796) was so harassed and humiliated by the Annamese that he fled for protection to the Siamese court. It was he who, in 1794, constituted the province of Battambang as an hereditary fief in the family of the mandarin Ben (see p. 195), whose descendants ruled there as independent kinglets (nominally under Siamese suzerainty) until 1907. Before Ang-Eng died, his place was taken on the throne by Ang-Chan II (1794-1834) who remained in Cambodia and was, therefore, nothing but an Annamese stooge.

When the king died, the Annamese had his daughter, Ang-Wei, proclaimed as queen regent—the only one in all Cambodian history—she reigned, if she did not rule, until 1841.

After her there was an interregnum of four years until her uncle, Ang-Duong (born 1796, reigned from 1845 to 1859), was crowned. With Ang-Duong we are in the period of modern history and the beginning of the French control.

Ang-Duong was, at the beginning of his reign, held in a state of servitude and so pressed and hemmed on either side by the Siamese and the Annamese that he could not even play one off against the other. It was, indeed, only the fear entertained both by the court of Bangkok for the power of Annam, and by the court of Hué for the strength of Siam, which prevented a final show-down between the two states. A show-down that, whatever side had been victorious,

would have secured the final disappearance of Cambodia as a political entity.

Ang-Duong succeeded to a Cambodia independent only in name and, moreover, shorn of its richest provinces. As early as 1854, the king had sought a way out of his difficulties under the protection of the French, already established in Cochin-China. But the resolute opposition of the Bangkok court, Siamese threats and, also, the French lack of enthusiasm for the project, forced Ang-Duong to drop his scheme.

However, soon afterwards, the French annexed Cochin-China and thus set a term to Annamese expansion (since the only practicable way for the Annamese to get into Cambodia was through the Cochin-Chinese lands of the Mekong delta). Furthermore, Napoleon III's Second Empire was now in existence and the emperor was much more disposed to follow an imperialistic and expanding policy overseas than was the timid, middle-class and shaken government of Louis-Philippe.

Ang-Duong died in 1859 and was succeeded by his son Norodom (*rectè* Narottama). This remarkable monarch was the offspring of Ang-Duong by the *meang* (concubine) Pen. He was sent, as quite a young child, a hostage to Bangkok, where he remained until he was allowed to return to Cambodia to be crowned king at Udong.

In 1863, Norodom was easily 'persuaded' by Admiral de La Grandière to put himself and his realm under French protection. Indeed, Norodom was acute enough to see that there was no other way out for him to follow. The Protection Treaties were signed (on behalf of Napoleon III) in 1863 by La Grandière and, in the following year, by Doudart de Lagrée (after whom is named the principal avenue of Phnompenh). There was, in France, no open opposition to the 'annexation' of Cambodia. The French were riding on a wave of national expansion, economic prosperity and the self-confidence bred of prosperity. Moreover, the Second Empire's publicity and propaganda were better effected than were those of the Third Republic. The fierce fighting, the reverses, the international complications and the parliamentary and political storms which, during the 'eighties of the last century, beat about the establishment of the French protectorate in Annam and Tongking, had no counterpart in the setting-up of Napoleon III as suzerain of the Cambodian kings.

In 1867, the Annamese *enclave* in the western provinces of Cambodia was abolished, and the ancient kingdom was at least

unified if still shorn of its Mekong estuary lands and still deprived of the ancient Khmer territories of Angkor, Sisophon and Battambang.

Norodom was the last of the old-fashioned Cambodian kings. He was a rigorous autocrat, stern with his family and court; at times jovial and affable; economical and gifted with a keen business sense; very much the sovereign lord. He was, of course, feared, exalted and adored by his people, bemused as they were, by his personality and success in securing (at what price the Cambodians knew not) freedom from rapine, civil war and foreign invasion. And no people ever yet, for long, adored a ruler whom they did not also fear. The Cambodian is a lover of the marvellous and although Norodom died only a little over forty years ago, his is already a figure looming legendary in the timeless, dreamy atmosphere of his realm. He has attracted to his name both myths and legends young and old. A study of the folklore of Norodom would be illuminating for the light it would throw upon the formation of 'history'—that is, biased fable. . . .

In April 1904, Norodom died and was succeeded by his half-brother, Sisowath (*rectè* Çri Svasti), another son of Ang-Duong, but by the *meang*, or concubine, Pu. Sisowath, born in 1840, was also sent in early life as a hostage to Bangkok, where he received his education and passed his youth, since he did not get back to Cambodia until 1868, when he was twenty-eight years of age. Thus, both Norodom and his brother Sisowath were brought up as Siamese, and they both spoke Siamese as well as they spoke Cambodian. They enjoyed the immense spiritual advantage of being bi-lingual. But Sisowath was sixty-four when he succeeded to the throne. He had spent thirty-six years learning the business of state under French officials and in watching the development of the French protectorate.

Norodom steadfastly, and successfully, opposed any essential reforms in the structure of his state. For all his reign the old regime prevailed, tempered, it may be in practice, but unchanged in theory. All the land and the property of the kingdom still belonged to the monarch. Landowners were but tenants at will of the monarch. No civil rights, no political rights and no fixed legal code were enjoyed by old Norodom's subjects. He was lord, master and sole possessor of everything and everybody within his dominions.

Sisowath, who was a man of very considerable natural intelligence, and of a less absolute and autocratic nature than his brother (or,

perhaps we should say, that having been obliged for sixty-four years of his life to dissemble and to efface himself, he was too tired to be harsh when he became king) was also marvellously modern for a man, after all, bred and born in the atmosphere of Asiatic absolutism. Nothing, perhaps, illustrates better the cunning, watchful and patient policy of the French than their careful moulding of Sisowath during his years before sovereignty. At his coronation the king declared it as his will and pleasure that definite title-deeds to land should be established and that, henceforth, no subject should be robbed of his property by an act of the prince.

In Sisowath's reign, birth, marriage and death registration was set up. The land survey was organized. In 1911, a new penal code was promulgated. In 1922, the Cambodian judiciary was (and on the French model) completely reformed. Out of his privy purse, the king built, and endowed, a special school for princes and princesses of the royal family.

Sisowath visited France several times and thither brought the dancers of the royal ballet whose performances aroused excitement all over the world. For the first time, the West was afforded the revelation of the traditional Cambodian dance-drama, but it lost much of its significance when shown at the Paris opera before an audience, curious, indeed, and even admiring, but ignorant of all the background and meaning of what they saw.

Sisowath was in his eighty-ninth year when he died in 1928. No Annamese emperor ever lived to more than sixty. Difference of climate? Way of life? 'Race'? Or does the Little Vehicle of Salvation carry its passengers along gently and slowly?

But, despite all the reforms, Sisowath and his son and successor, Monivong (a dull and sad-looking sovereign who died in 1940), ruled as absolute monarchs. There was not even the apparatus of parliamentary government such as existed in pre-war Japan. The king was king.

The present King of Cambodia succeeded to the throne just before the Japanese occupation. The beginning of his reign was clouded with civil strife and the disorders following the Japanese defeat. But, with the promulgation of a Constitution, the holding of elections and, above all, by the skilful attitude of the French, who so arranged that under the new Cambodian dispensation they should be heard but not seen, the Cambodians relapsed into their good old ways, more or less, but things will never be quite the same again. . . . The Siamese and Annamese are still there, more avid, more numerous,

Phnompenh: Baku carrying the Sacred Sword (p. 228)





better armed and more insinuating than a hundred years ago . . . perhaps the last hundred years have just afforded a respite for the Khmers—a last dream before they disappear and are 'assimilated' or whatever we may like to call it. But, perhaps also, the new weapons of war may decimate the human race and reduce the pressure before Cambodia fades away from the face of the earth.

After the liberation of Cambodia from the Japanese occupation, there was a good deal of commotion in the land. An 'advance' party, all for the complete independence of the land and for the abolition of the monarchy, provoked a little civil war and gave the French some trouble when they were endeavouring in Indo-China, with very inadequate means, to get back where they had been.

Still, there was never the devastating war such as ravaged the Annamese lands. A compromise was effected. In 1946, Prince Sisowath Yuthevong became, after the victory of the Democratic Party at the elections to the Constituent Assembly, first Prime Minister of Cambodia. Yuthevong, who had studied at Montpellier and Paris, was the principal author of the Cambodian Constitution promulgated in May 1947, and he looked like guiding his country rather wisely for years to come, when he died, at the early age of thirty-four, in July 1947.

The French, who no longer administer Cambodia directly, are still, of course, the real authority behind the Throne and the Parliament. However, Cambodia to-day has probably got as much liberalism, constitutionalism and political freedom as the mass of the people can digest for several years to come. But the whole future of the country depends upon the ability of the French to maintain themselves in Indo-China. Still, it is not proving so easy to get the pink men out of south-eastern Asia, as it seemed only in 1945 and 1946 that it was going to be.

Ut ameris amabilis esto.

In the tradition of classical Confucianism 'ritual serves as an instrument to form men's characters . . . and increases what is beautiful in their natures.' Rites are, indeed, held to be the concrete manifestation of the natural order and harmony of the universe and a means of inducing and of maintaining harmony among men, for the Chinese have always considered that the main function of government, as well as the principal preoccupation of individual men, should be the fostering of the art of living together. All this seems

The Palace Dancer (*p.* 224)

very old-fashioned to us now, living as we are under dispensations whose care is not at all to foster the art of living together with our fellow-men.

Again, if we are disinclined to see any natural order and harmony in the universe, we need not, forasmuch, neglect the importance of the rites on art. To perform a role, to play an art, to create and to re-create, we need to set ourselves apart, to mark, and by marking to create a transition, and there is no better way of putting ourselves into a good disposition than by performing rites which, too, steady the nerves and purge us a little of presumption, pride and pre-judgment.

At the Cambodian court the graduation ceremonies for the royal dancers were until yesterday performed with ceremony and pomp of an antique and sacred character. A Thursday will be picked for the ceremonies. Thursday is an auspicious day for most things in Cambodia and its colour is deep saffron, Gamboge yellow, joyous and divine. Formerly the day would be chosen in a female month (for the Cambodian year is divided into female months of thirty days and male months of twenty-nine days) preferably that of *phalkun* (March) or *pisak* (May). Now the ceremonies are generally held in July or August.

Eight altars are set up in the rehearsal hall of the palace and at the eight points of the compass.

On the evening before the main ceremony, ten monks are brought in to recite prayers calling down benison. The teachers, the dancers and the audience all repeat the Five Commandments, not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to drink alcohol. The next morning, about eight o'clock, a platform covered with a white cloth is put up in the hall. On the cloth are placed the dancers' masks and headgear. In the centre is the mask of the hermit *Muk Eysey*, on the left the ten-visaged mask of *Muk Dap*, or Ravana. The four-faced yellow mask of Brahma, the green visages of Indra and Rama, the golden face of Laksmana, the red mask of Bharata. Yak Roang, the Prince of the Giants, has a mask like that of his master Ravana, but it is of silver gilt. The blackbird mask of Sarika is of black satin . . . the masks of ogres and giants, the crowns of queens and the diadems of princesses. To the right are the tiaras of divinities, the crowns of kings and princes and the masks of males and men.

The candles and the incense-sticks are lit. By the flickering amber light, the coloured fruits, the varied viands and the offerings

all merge into the rich, dull background, while wisps of blue incense-smoke curl in the air. The organizer of the ceremony reads the formula of invocation of the spirits of dance and music. The little dancers rise from their places and carry plates of offerings upon their heads to eight altars at the eight points of the compass. One girl pours a libation of coco-nut milk and another one of alcohol. All throw a handful of grilled rice to the north, to the east, to the south and to the west.

The presiding dignitary (representing the Spirit of the Dance) then puts on the mask of the Hermit and, beginning with the mask of Ravana of the Ten Faces, imposes upon each little dancer the mask or tiara or diadem of her role. On to every girl is tied a cotton thread steeped in holy water. He asperges each one slightly and anoints her upon the forehead with perfume thickened in rice powder. He then congratulates them and wishes them 'success' in their careers. And they all put away their masks and dance, in graceful groups, while the music ripples, liquid, shrill and captivating.

The yellow candles burn down. The incense cools the air.

Then all the girls put on their masks and dance together until the lights flicker out and the last dim glint and glitter of golden jewels and crocus-coloured visage fades into the gloom. . . .

Music

The Khmers seem always to have been fond of music. On the Angkor bas-reliefs are images of lutes, flutes, cymbals, drums, gongs, bells, tom-toms, tambourines, trumpets, horns, conch-shells, harps, violins, guitars, theorbos and xylophones and all sorts of instruments of music.[1]

Cambodian music is quite different from that of any Indian. Southern Indian music—or, indeed, any Indian music—as we have it to-day, belongs to the western complex, it is our own sort of music. The southern Indian music, humming, booming, recitative and ritual, with the almost intolerably stressed 'm's and double 'm's, rolling, rumbling and rising and falling like the wind, is a living, flesh and blood thing, to appreciate which we have to make no effort at all.

Indian music is, of course, also melody untouched by harmony,

[1] It may be noted that on the Bayon sculptures (thirteenth century) are represented costumes and arms (as well as musical instruments) unknown in India but still to be found among the Mois and other Indonesian tribes.

but the octave, like that of the West, contains seven tones (with an eighth and a ninth as alternatives but not as additions) whereas Cambodian musicians use the pentatonic scale as do the Chinese.

Music in China itself, like the dance and many other manifestations of social life, is an impoverished thing compared with its old self.

No doubt the most fruitful field for the study of early Chinese music lies in Korea and there is, as far as I know, no modern work, at any rate, in a European language devoted to Korean music, which, in any case, has been overlaid and debauched by modern Japanese. However, just as old Chinese spoken language has been reconstructed from the speech and tongues of lands of cultural borrowing, so may we hope to recapture the music of that old, mysterious robust China. The China of totemistic survivals, of shamanistic dances, of drugged dancing girls, bear-symbolism and many northern things now quite faded away.

Japanese music, classical Japanese music, the music of, for instance, the No dances, has a range, a depth, and a majesty unknown in modern Chinese. The gorgeous, sometimes rather gurgling, but majestic bass voices, reminding one of Gregorian chants transposed and transformed, resound with a richness unknown almost elsewhere in the Far East.

Siamese music is less static, less hieratic than the Cambodian. It has freedom. Then there is the difference between the singing in a tonal language and the singing in a non-tonal, harsh, and heavy rather guttural tongue such as Khmer.

The Cambodian knows none of the modes and moods and changes of the Indian themes. The rippling, cool, watery sounds of the xylophone, the squeaks of the oboes and the throbbing of the drums, go on for hours. There is none of the dusty, harsh artificiality of Chinese and Annamese music, none of the deep significance of Japanese. The wild excesses of the Balinese *gamelan* are unknown. Even the variations and the easy flourishes of the Siamese[1] are wanting.

Das Schlimme aber ist dass alles Denken zum Denken nichts hilft; man muss von Natur richtig sein, so dass die guten Einfälle immer wie freie Kinder Gottes vor uns dastehen und uns zurufen; da sind wir!

GOETHE

[1] In 1686 the Siamese envoys brought back to their country from the Court of Louis XIV the music of the French minuet.

A last night at the Blue Pavilion. The end of an interlude much more strange by the thoughts evoked than by the sights seen. It is easy to attribute to Little Vehicle Buddhism most of the peculiarities of the modern Cambodians. Here is a people whose ancestors, not so long ago, raised mighty monuments and created a significant art. Here is a people with no literature and with crafts instead of arts. And Little Vehicle Buddhism is, we are told, in its essence, opposed to the arts.

We hear often that the Little Vehicle is 'real' or 'original' Buddhism, the doctrine of the Founder, as opposed to the extravagances of the Great Vehicle. But, as a matter of fact, the Little Vehicle has strayed as far in one direction from the 'original' Buddhism as has the Great Vehicle in another. The Buddha lived against the rich and ancient background of Indian civilization. He must have taken for granted, his doctrine must have taken for granted, a whole *ensemble* which could not be exported. No missionary religion, in spreading abroad, avoids assuming a new face and a new soul.

The underlying preoccupation of the Indians has been out of men to make gods. The Buddha's was, essentially, one way of achieving this end. The Little Vehicle, as it exists to-day in Cambodia, Siam, Burma and Ceylon, is, for the people, a worship of the Buddha, and, for the more educated monks, a theology with a fragile philosophic basis.

The Great Vehicle, by its insistence on the multitude of Buddhas and the host of Boddhisattvas (or beings fit to be Buddhas, but delaying their Buddhahood in order to save men), developed, it is true, into a practical polytheism for the masses, but also into a refined philosophic system for the initiates.

And the Great Vehicle, in its most refined and subtle form, the Ch'an of China and the Zen of Japan, leads back, by new paths perhaps, to the Indian position, to the Indian preoccupation with making gods out of men. That is to say the Zen adepts deny all reality except that which exists for a man within a man. When he sees the Zen light he is *jenseits von Gut und Böse*—'Beyond Good and Evil'—all this sounds very 'modern.'

Yet the Cambodians were once Great Vehicle Buddhists, but their Great Vehicle, if it enabled their sovereigns to raise a few great monuments (most of them, as we have seen, are not Buddhist), evoked and called forth no literature and no philosophy. Why?

Probably the fact is that the Cambodians got their civilization

too suddenly. It was not evolved. It was adopted, and the Khmers never formed for themselves a language to command and to serve the complications of thought. . . .

The Master's dying words:

'Have I not told you many times that the nature of all things nearest and dearest to us is that we must separate from them? O Ananda, how would it be possible, since all things born carry with them the necessity of death, how would it be possible that this sort should not die; It could not be otherwise.'

We are leaves fading while the tree lives.

'Be then, O Ananda, your own Lamps. Be your own Refuge. Cling to the Lamp of Truth,' that is Sincerity.



Railways
SCALE OF MILES
0
300
Chihkiang
Siangtan
Kweiyang
Chaotung
Hweitseh
Tali
C H I N A
Kweilin
Kunming
(Yunnan)
Paoshan
Bhamo
Ishan
Liuchow
CANTON
Mengtsz
Namhoi
Lashio
Laokay
Yungning
(Nanning)
Red
TONGKING
BURMA
Pakhoi
Taunggyi
Muongsing
Hanoi
Haiphong
Chankiang
Luang-
prabang
G. of
Tongking
Kiungshan
Chiang Mai
Vientiane
Vinh
Hainan
Hatinh
Samah
Uttaradit
Mi Chai
Quangtri
Hue
Phitsanulok
S I A M
FRENCH INDO-CHINA
Moulmein
Savannakhet
Tourane
Faifo
Ubon
Ye
Korat
Quangngai
Mekong
Ayutthaya
A N N A M
Bassac
BANGKOK
Binh Dinh
ANGKOR
Chep
Rat Buri
Quinnon
Tonle Sap
Battambang
CAMBODIA
Pailin
Mergui
Kratie
Cam Ranh B.
Phompenh
Phanrang
Saigon
G. of
Siam
Cholon
Kampot
COCHIN
CHINA
Samui I.
Longxuyen
Ban Don
Poulo
Condore
Malay
Songkhla
South China
Sea
Alor Star
Kota Bharu
Penang
Pen.
Idi
Ipoh
MALAYA
Gr. Natuna

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The mass of the material relating to the archæology, the ethnology and the natural history of the Laos and of Cambodia is to be found in periodical publications of which the *Bulletin of the Ecole Française*

d'Extrême-Orient is the most important. The whole of Indo-China is in such a state of flux and the political and economic future of the region so uncertain, that works on the economy of the former Indo-Chinese Union are out of date. The most valuable of those available is the book of Charles Robequain noted above.

Those interested in Cambodia and the Laos, as well as in the other lands of French Indo-China, can be strongly advised to visit, when they have the opportunity, the Musée Guimet, place d'Iéna, Paris, XVIe where are gathered the finest collection of Indo-Chinese works of art outside Indo-China, an admirable library and a very rich collection of photographs. The museum, in any case, which is now the principal museum of Far Eastern art in France, should be visited by all who spend even a few days in Paris.

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